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LONDON IN THE NEWS

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ETC.

Editor of
Encyclopaedia of London

London in the News

Through Three Centuries

WILLIAM KENT, F.S.A.

'I shall cheerfully bear the reproach of
having descended below the dignity of history.'

LORD MACAULAY, *History of England*.



S T A P L E S P R E S S

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Foreword

I think I can claim that this book is unique inasmuch as it is confined to piquant events in London. *News from the Past*, by Yvonne Ffrench, and *Front Page News – Once*, by George Bilainkin (1937) cast a net wider than mine by even extending to Ireland. These books, too, had rather more regard to national history. My volume might be described as dealing with the hinterland of history – the trials of the common man that do not enter into the annals of a country.

There is consolation in my collection for almost all my tragedies are not likely to recur. Body-snatchers and highwaymen belong to the past; suicides are no longer stigmatized by the manner of their burial; corpses are not now likely to be arrested; grave-diggers are not buried in the graves of their own making; wives may have monetary assets, but they are not bought and sold – if they were, assuredly prices would be much higher in the matrimonial, as in other markets.

If it be said that in these past ages there were no atom bombs, I can only say that to me it is inconceivable that any restraint in using such deadly weapons, had they been available, would have been due to moral squeamishness.

I once read some extracts from this book to Claremont Adult School, Islington. I had not proceeded more than ten minutes when a lady rose and asked if I could not relate something nice that occurred in the eighteenth century. The reply was obvious. Tragedy is always news; niceness seldom is. If, in my collection of incidents, there is much more pathos than amusement, much that is revolting and little that is edifying, it is not due to any preference of mine but to the nature of the records. In these days of wars

and rumours of wars there is a tendency to look back nostalgically to 'the good old times'. My evidence will, at any rate, show that life as compared with these days was, in Hobbes' phrase, 'nasty, brutish and short'. My late and much lamented friend Ernest Barnes (who came from Dorset) might have used my book to point the moral of another Wessex man, Thomas Hardy, expressed in the last sentence of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: 'Happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.'

I am much indebted to the *Annual Register*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Times*, and the remarkable collection of newspapers (commencing with 1603) which was made by Dr Charles Burney (son of the historian of music and sister of the more famous Fanny Burney, friend of Dr Johnson) which was bought by the British Museum in 1818.

Clapham,

W. K.

September 1953.

1649-1748

THE EXECUTION OF A KING

January 29th to February 5th, 1649

Tuesday, January 30th

A PERFECT DIURNALL

This day the king was beheaded over against the banquetting house by Whitehall.

Thursday, February 1st

A PERFECT DIURNALL

The king's head is sowed on, and his corps removed to St James and embalmed, a committee to consider of the time, manner and place of his funeral, by his ancestors, but not yet agreed upon.

Wednesday, February 7th

A PERFECT DIURNALL

This day the corps of the late king were removed from St James to Windsor, to be there interred in St George's Chappel, and moneys allowed for that purpose.

COFFEE A CUREALL

May 19th-26th, 1657 THE PUBLICK ADVERTISER

In Bartholomew Lane, on the back side of the old Exchange, the drink called coffee, which is a very wholsom and physical drink having many vertues, closes the orifice of the stomach, fortifies the heat within, helpeth digestion, quickneth the spirits, maketh the heart lightsom, is good against eyesores, coughs, colds, rhumes, consumptions, head-ach, dropsie, gout, scurvy, King's Evil and many others, is to be sold both in the morning and three of the clock in the afternoon.

The first coffee house in England of which there is record was opened in Oxford in 1650. The first in London was in St Michael's Alley, Cornhill. It was opened by a Greek, Pasqua Rosee, in 1652. Sir Leslie Boyce, Lord Mayor of London, unveiled a memorial plaque in 1952.

ENTER TEA

September 2nd-9th, 1658 COMMONWEALTH MERCURY

That excellent . . . by all physitians approved, China drink, called by the Chineans, tcha, by other nations, tay or tee, is sold at the Sultanness Head, a cophee house in Sweetings Rents by the Royal Exchange, London.

The first reference to tea by a Briton is in a letter dated June 27th, 1615. It was written by a Mr Wickham, and is in the archives of the old East India Company. The issue of the *Commonwealth Mercury* quoted, also included a report of the death of Oliver Cromwell.

EXIT OTHELLO

January 5th, 1685 LONDON GAZETTE

Run away the first instant from Sir Phineas Pet at the Navy Office, a Negro about 16 years of age, pretty tall. He speaks English, but slow in speech, with a livery of a dark-coloured cloth, lined with blue, and so edged in the seams, the buttons pewter, wearing a short cap, his coat somewhat too short for him, he is called by the name of Othello, he took with him a new blue livery suit (with several other things) the suit being laced with gold galloon, and lined with orange colour, and the sleeves fringed about with silk fringe, and laced upon the facing with narrow gold galloon, whoever gives notice of the said Negro, so that he be restored to his master, Sir Phineas Pet, shall be very well rewarded.

THE HANGMAN HANGED

April 26th, 1718 MIST'S WEEKLY JOURNAL

On Sunday the Lord Mayor was taken so ill at dinner, that he was carried away by his servants, but is so well recovered that he sate in Court this week at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey, where the former hangman was tried for the murder of an old woman that sold nuts and apples in Bunhill Fields. Who making a resistance when he robb'd her, he beat one of the eyes out of her head, broke one of her arms, of which she died; he was found guilty, and is such a harden'd villain that he appeared not at all concerned, and went after-wards upon the leads, and took the present hangman by the hand, telling him he hangd a great many, and now he must hang him. The old woman that he robb'd had but five shillings upon her.

It was later reported that he was unrepentant to the end, and was drunk for several days. He was hanged in Bunhill Fields, and the body afterwards suspended in chains at Kingsland.

Mist's Weekly Journal had Daniel Defoe amongst its frequent contributors.

THE HANGMAN HELD

September 26th, 1719 MIST'S WEEKLY JOURNAL

On Saturday night last Robert Marvel, the late hangman (who beheaded the Earls of Derwent-water and Kenmure on Tower Hill, and who was arrested in going to Tyburn with three malefactors, who by that means were brought back and not executed, and for which he was turned out of his office), was committed to Newgate for thieving, and being unruly, was put into the condemn'd hold.

He was sentenced to transportation and, as an alternative, 'heartily desir'd that any corporal punishment might be inflicted upon him tho' he was to be whipt a mile together, he would willingly and thankfully submit to it. However, though his request was not fully answer'd, as to his earnest desire of being whip'd at home yet in some measure, it was granted, at his going abroad, for they whipt him away on board among the rest of his brethren in iniquity'.

ALMOST A NUDIST BRIDE

March 2nd, 1723 THE WEEKLY JOURNAL
AND BRITISH GAZETTE

On Monday morning last one Brittain, a widow woman in Milford Lane, was married to a brewer's servant at the church of St. Clement Danes; and being advised by her learned counsel, or as others say, some old woman in the neighbourhood, went to the Church door without any manner of apparel on than her bare smock to the great surprize and laughter of the numerous crowd of spectators. By means of this cunning adventure she thinks herself it seems not liable to pay any debts contracted by her former husband. At the church door her intended spouse took her in his arms and carrying her to an apothecaries house over against the church new cloath'd her from top to toe, after which whimsical transaction the nuptials were solemnized very gravely.

'OUT OF THE LAND OF BONDAGE'

July 20th, 1723 THE WEEKLY JOURNAL AND BRITISH GAZETTE

On Tuesday last some thousands of the Minters went out of the land of bondage, alias the Mint, to be cleared at the Quarter Sessions at Guildford, according to the late Act of Parliament. The road was covered with them, inasmuch that they looked like one of the Jewish tribes going out of Egypt, the cavalcade consisting of caravans, carts and wagons, besides numbers on horses, asses, and on foot. The drawer of the *Two Fighting Cocks* was seen to lead an ass loaded with Geneva, to support the spirits of the ladies upon the journey: tis said several heathen bailiffs lay in ambuscade in ditches upon the road to surprise some of them, if possible on their march, if they should straggle from the main body; but they proceeded with so much order and discipline that they did not lose a man upon this expedition.

The following is an extract from W. E. H. Lecky's *History of England during the Eighteenth Century* (1878-90):

'The district of Whitefriars and the Savoy had for centuries the privilege of sheltering debtors against their creditors and they had become the citadels of the worst characters in the community who defied the officers of justice and were a perpetual danger to the surrounding districts. In 1697 a law had been passed annulling their privileges but similar privileges, though not legally recognised, were claimed for the Mint in Southwark and for many years were successfully maintained. Multitudes of debtors, and with them great numbers of more serious criminals, fled to this quarter. Attempts of the officers to arrest them were resisted by open violence. Every kind of crime was concocted with impunity, and every conspirator knew where to look for daring and unscrupulous

agents. It was not until 1723 that the Government ventured to grapple firmly with this great evil. An Act making it a felony to obstruct the execution of a writ and enabling the Sheriff of Surrey to raise a *posse comitatus* for taking by force debtors from the Mint finally removed this plague spot from the metropolis and put an end for ever in England to that right of sanctuary which had for many generations been one of the most serious obstructions to the empire of the Law.'

CENTENARIANS

June 1st, 1724 NEWS LETTER

Last Thursday, as the nobility and others of distinction were passing through Pall Mall in the midst of their gaiety to the pallace of St. James' to pay their compliments to his Majesty on occasion of his birthday, one Elinor Stuart was placed in their way as an object of compassion, on account of her great age and misfortunes, being 124 years old. She kept a linen shop at Kendal in Westmoreland, in the time of the Civil War, and had nine children at the time King Charles I was beheaded, and was undone by adhering to the royal cause. The Princess of Wales, seeing her, caused her chair to stop, and, after talking with her gave her a generous relief, and ordered her to come to Lester House for more. She is reckoned (Jane Skrimshaw being now dead who was 128) the oldest woman in London.

Leicester House was on the north side of Leicester Square. It was rebuilt at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and its successor was destroyed by fire in 1865.

It would be rash to assume that of the women either was of the age given. (See under September 1941, and also the writer's *London Mystery and Mythology* (1952) on the question of centenarians.

SHORTHAND

March 4th, 1726 DAILY POST BOY

We hear that on Monday night last several gentlemen who had learnt Mr. Byron's shorthand, met at the King's Arms tavern near Temple Bar; and commenc'd a society for the encouragement of that method, which is said to have been very much approved of, and likely to meet with general acceptance.

The Romans had a system of shorthand equal to taking down a verbatim report of a speech. The first English system was published in 1588. Its author was Timothy Bright, and his book was entitled *Characteric. An art of short, swift, and secret writing by character*. Pepys' diary was written in Shelton's system called Tachygraphy first published in 1620. In the west walk of the cloisters of Westminster Abbey there is an epitaph on William Laurence who died in 1621 at the age of 27. Two lines run:

'Short Hand he wrot: his flowre in prime did fade,
And hasty death Short Hand of him hath made.'

A SNOBBISH SPECIALIST

October 19th, 1728 DAILY POST BOY

A safe and speedy remedy to give ease in the gout by a plaster that draws out the pain and strengthens the part; takes off the fitt in a night's time. Several persons that have made use of it have never had the gout since. It is to be had of a gentlewoman that lives at the Rev. Mr. Shard's in Stepney.

N.B. She goes not to any person out of the neighbourhood without a coach being sent for her.

A WIFE FOR SALE

September 6th, 1729 COUNTRY JOURNAL

Last Wednesday one Everet, of Fleet Lane, sold his wife to one Griffin of Long Lane for a 3/- bowl of punch; who, we hear, hath since complained of having a bad bargain.

This is not the lowest price recorded. In 1857 a man sold his wife at Worcester for 1s and a quart of ale. An incident of this kind opens Thomas Hardy's fine novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

A GRAVE BURGLAR

May 25th, 1732 THE UNIVERSAL SPECTATOR AND
WEEKLY JOURNAL

John Loftas, the grave-digger, committed to prison for robbing of dead corpse [*sic*] has confessed to the plunder of above fifty, not only of their coffins and burial cloaths but of their fat, where bodies afforded any, which he retailed at high price to certain people, who, it is believed, will be called upon on account thereof. Since this discovery several persons had had their friends dug up, who were found quite naked, and some mangled in so horrible a manner as could scarcely be supposed to be done by a human creature.

During the First World War there was an unfounded rumour that the Germans were extracting fat from corpses.

THE CITY FREEDOM

July 3rd, 1735 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

A great cause was try'd in the Court of King's Bench, Guildhall, between John Busworth, Chamberlain of London, plaintiff for the City of London, and Daniel Watson Shalloon, a drugget seller, Defendant, who was sued for opening shop in Blackfryers and retailing his goods there without being a Freeman of the City. The Counsel for the Plaintiff alleged that Blackfriars actually belonged to the City of London when it was a monastery, and before trades were ever occupy'd there, to prove which they produced several ancient records, viz. a charter of King Edward I and a Record II Richard II (1379) calling it the Friary of London; and another 2 Henry VIII mentioning a Parliament held at the Fryars Preachers of the City of London, November 3, 1530, and other records of this kind: they likewise cited a parallel case to this, 15 Car. I, when an action was brought against one Philpot, a shoemaker of Black-fryars for opening shop and vending shoes there without being Free of the City; and after a fair trial, by an equal and indifferent jury of the county of Hertford, a verdict was given for the City; Then they call'd two or three officers of the City to prove that they had executed writs and other processes in Black-fryars. The Defendant's Council [*sic*] pleaded custom time out of mind, and called eleven witnesses who declared they had known Black-fryars, some of them, 20, 30, and 40 years and upwards, and that several persons had kept open shops there, unmolested and not Freeman; though some

of them could not deny but that there had been people sued, particularly about a year ago when a person suffer'd judgment to go against him by Default. The jury, who were all chose out of Middlesex, brought in a verdict for the Plaintiff with 5/- damages.

Now there is no such restriction, although the confermen of the freedom of the city upon a meritorious individual is supposed to carry with it the right to start any sort o business.

The *Gentleman's Magazine* was founded in 1731 by Edward Cave, under the pseudonym of 'Sylvanus Urban'. Cave was a friend and first London employer of Samuel Johnson who wrote his biography. St John's Gate, Clerkenwell from which it was published, still stands in St John's Lane. An engraving thereof was upon the title page until 1868 and it was also painted on the panel of Cave's coach. The *Gentleman's Magazine* lasted until 1922 but, of course, much altered in format.

A LONDON FLOOD

February 16th, 1736 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

A question was carried in the House of Commons for building a bridge over the Thames from Palace Yard to the Surrey side. During the debate that river overflowed its banks by reason of a strong spring tide, the water was higher than ever known before, and rose above two feet in Westminster Hall where the courts being sitting, the Judges etc. were obliged to be carry'd out. The water came into all the cellars and ground rooms near the river on both sides, and flowed through the streets of Wapping and Southwark as its proper channel; a general inundation covered all the marshes and lowlands in Kent, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, and some thousands of cattle were destroyed with several of their owners in endeavouring to save them.

The frontispiece of the volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for this year is a map of the world before the flood!

WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ANNOUNCED

February 28th, 1736 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Several proposals were laid before the House of Commons for building a bridge at Westminster the fund for which to be raised by way of lottery; also for laying such a duty in distilled spirituous liquor as may prevent the ill consequences of the poorer sort drinking to excess. We have observed some signs where such liquors are retailed with the following inscriptions, *Drunk for a penny, dead drunk for twopence; clean straw for nothing*. One of the plans for building a bridge proposes the making a fine road to it and raising wharfs and keys from Scotland Yard to New Palace Yard out of the shore of the Thames which making it narrower will quicken the current, and thereby cleanse the bottom and make the river deeper and more navigable.

This shows conclusively that Hogarth's picture 'Gin Lane' was not a caricature.

A HANGMAN ROBBER

May 24th, 1736 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Jack Catch on his return from doing his office at Tyburn robb'd a woman of 3s 6d for which he was committed to Newgate.

'Jack Catch' was a name facetiously given to the executioner. There was one in the time of Charles II with the name of Jack Ketch, and somehow this became a synonym for the hangman.

In the light of the above the following is an interesting item in *The Times* of January 4th, 1884:

'Bartholomew Binns, the public hangman, and Alfred Archer, his assistant, were brought up yesterday morning at the Dewsbury Court House and fined 20/- each and costs for defrauding the London & North-Western Railway Company by travelling on their line without tickets with intent to escape payment.'

They discredited 'the mistery', as Shakespeare's Abhorson might have said. Sir Walter Scott recalled seeing an advertisement for a hangman in a Scottish paper. It concluded: 'None but persons of respectable character need apply'. Perhaps the authorities in the above cases were not sufficiently particular about references.

In *Evening News* (1946) there were given particulars of applications made in 1883 to be successor to Marwood as executioner. One gentleman wrote: 'I am by profession a scaffolder. Would you honour me with the appointment, I will do my best to please all parties.'

WHY A BOAR COST MORE

August 24th, 1736 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

A fatter boar was hardly ever seen than one taken up this day coming out of Fleet Ditch into the Thames: it proved to be a butcher's near Smithfield Bars, who had missed him five months all which time it seems he had been in the common sewer, and was improved in price from 10s to 2 guineas.

THE WORM THAT WENT

January 5th, 1737 DAILY JOURNAL

These are to certify that, whereas, I, Hannah Goph, dwelling with M. —, Distiller at Richmond Green, was troubled with a great Pain in my stomach and side, a swimming in my head, a Shortness of Breath, my Stomach being also swelled; for relief of which disorders I applied to

MR. JOHN MOORE, Apothecary,
at the Pestle and Mortar in Laurence-Pountney's Lane, the first great gates on the Left Hand from Cannon Street, Of whom I had some of his worm medicines, which brought from me a worm *thirteen yards and a half long*; since the coming away of which I am much better in my head, stomach, side and breath.

December 6, 1736.

HANNAH GOPH.

N.B. — This Worm is to be seen at the said Mr. Moore's and any Person, for further Satisfaction may enquire at Mrs. Ellen's, near the Playhouse at Richmond; at Mrs. Pattingall's at the Fountain in Crucifix Lane, near St. John's Church, Southwark, or at Mrs. Lark's, over against St. Olave's workhouse in Southwark.

This would have been a good item for a recently published book *The Shocking History of Advertising*, by E. S. Turner.

RATIONS FROM A STEEPLE

December 18th, 1737 LONDON MAGAZINE

This day, according to annual custom, bread and cheese were thrown from Paddington steeple to the populace, agreeable to the will of two women who were relieved there with bread and cheese when they were almost starved; and providence afterwards favouring them, they left an estate in that parish to continue the custom for ever on that day.

The Grub Street Journal for December 21st, 1726, said:

‘The custom was established by two women who purchased five acres of land to the above use in commemoration of the particular charity whereby they had been relieved when in extreme necessity.’

This practice has long been discontinued.

A VAIN RESCUE

December 19th, 1738 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

James Buchanan, a sailor condemned at the Admiralty Sessions for the murder of Mr. Smith in China, was hanged at Execution Dock, but after a few minutes was cut down by a gang of sailors, and was carried off in a boat and was brought to life but retaken. The compassion thus shown this criminal by his brother tars, is said to arise from his good character, and being without cause more severely beat by Smith who was a petty officer than any Englishman ought to bear without resenting.

Execution Dock was at Wapping.

A MUCH MATERNAL MALEFACTOR

December 21st, 1738 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The three malefactors before mentioned ['James Gardiner for stealing a gold watch; John Rigby for the highway; William Bolingbroke for Burglary'] were executed and behaved penitently. Constantia James had got off nine times by pleading her belly.

To refine the last phrase, on nine occasions the lady had submitted that she was about to be confined, and a reprieve had followed.

BODY SNATCHING

April 6th, 1739 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Were executed at Kennington Common three highwaymen and a housebreaker condemned at the assizes for Surrey. The surgeons fixed on the body of one of them, a shoemaker, but it was rescued by a great number of the craft, and carried home in triumph to the widow who, to avoid reflections, having withdrawn herself, they were so exasperated that they hawked about the dead body for some hours, offering it to sale to all the apothecaries from Horsley down to Rotherhithe at a very cheap rate, and at last meeting with no purchaser, they pitched it all over, and buried it in St. George's Fields.

ONLY HALF-HANGED

November 29th, 1740 COUNTY JOURNAL OR
THE CRAFTSMAN

Duell, executed for the Rape, was brought to Surgeons' Hall, in order for Anatomy, but after he was stripped naked and lay on the Board several Hours and one of the Servants washing him to be cut up, he perceived life in him, on which a Surgeon bled him which recover'd him so much that he threw his Hand in the Surgeon's Face, and accidentally cut his Lips with the Lancet, and in about two Hours he came so much to himself as to sit up in a Chair, groaning very much, and seem'd in great Agitation, but could not speak. He was kept at Surgeons' Hall till Twelve O'Clock at Night, the Sheriffs Officers (who were sent for on this extraordinary Occasion) attending; he was then convey'd to Newgate, till he can be proved to be the very identical Person order'd for Execution the 24th Instant; which we hear may be done at the King's Bench Bar, without waiting for the next Sessions at the Old Bailey. Tuesday he was in good health in Newgate, eat his victuals heartily, and ask'd for his Mother. Great numbers of People resort continually to see him.

Duell was reprieved but transported. A member of the Barbers' Company, in the course of a most interesting lecture he used to give to parties visiting Barbers' Hall in Monkwell Street, related that the surgeons did not give him up to justice, but assisted his escape. He went abroad, and, in gratitude, sent a leather screen which was exhibited at Barbers' Hall – destroyed by bombs. The true story is

as above, and, remarkably, the official history of the company (*Annals of the Barber-Surgeons*, by Sidney Young, 1890) says:

‘A popular impression prevails, and frequently currency has been given to it, that Duell subsequently made a fortune abroad and out of gratitude to the Barber-Surgeons for saving his life, presented them with the handsome folding screen now in the Court Room, the best answer to which is that the screen in question is referred to in the Company’s Inventory some thirty years previously to Mr. Duell’s visit to Tyburn.’

In 1804, at Botany Bay, three attempts to hang a criminal failed. A fourth was about to be made when the Governor intervened, and he was reprieved.

On February 23rd, 1885, John Lee was to be executed at Exeter Gaol for the murder of his aged mistress and benefactor, Miss Keese, at Babbacombe. On being placed on the platform, owing to the swelling of the timber through rain, the drop would not act. Twice he was removed and repairs attempted. On the failure of the third attempt he was removed to his cell, and eventually the sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. *The Times* had a leading article criticizing this decision of Sir William Harcourt, then Home Secretary. The ‘Thunderer’ was backed up by several correspondents, one of whom suggested that ‘it should be announced that in future executions will take place weather permitting’. This writer signed herself ‘A Friend and Neighbour of the murdered lady’. There were certainly no extenuating circumstances. Lee broke Miss Keese’s skull, cut her throat, and set fire to her body.

The matter was raised in both Houses of Parliament. When it was suggested that it was difficult to get candidates for such a disgusting occupation as that of hangman, the reply was that, on a previous vacancy, there had been 800 applications.

JENNY DIVER'S TRICKS

March 18th, 1741 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Mary Young went to Tybourn in a mourning coach veiled and strongly guarded, there being a design formed to rescue her. As she appeared in several characters to carry on her tricks, she had several names as Murphy, Webb, and by way of eminence in her business of a pickpocket, that of Jenny Diver. This name was given her by a society of that profession of which of her dexterity she had raised herself to be directress. It was usual for one of this society in livery to attend her in her adventures and by this gay appearance . . . she often gained admittance into the apartments of ladies of the best fashion; in order to which her custom was to put on a false belly, and counterfeiting pains, to appear in great distress, while her pretended footman, with a seeming concern, knocked at the appointed door, and related his apprehensions of his lady's disorder. Being admitted, her pains always increased, and, while the family was hurried to procure her relief, she was busied in packing up the moveables. This stratagem succeeded more than once; but though by this and other practices of the like kind the Society made great booty, yet she did not approve of their riotous way of spending, and therefore ordered a tenth part to be laid up to support any of them that fell into trouble so that when she was twice transported, she was plentifully supplied with necessaries, and when in Newgate for the last offence, handsomely supported, she appeared gaily dressed even to the last, yet deeply affected with her approaching fate.

Her concern was so sensibly expressed when she took leave of her little child a few days before her execution that (a weekly writer says) it drew tears into the eyes of the turnkey.

This smacks of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* in which Jenny Diver was one of the characters.

HIGH TREASON

January 19th, 1743 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Thomas Rounce found guilty of fighting against his country on board of two Spanish privateers was conveyed on a hurdle from Newgate to Execution Dock. The executioner was in the hurdle with him, having in his hand the scimeter with which he was to quarter him soon after he was hung up. The executioner cut him down, and immediately severed his head from his body, ripped up his stomach, and took out his heart etc., exposing them for some time to the crowd which was so very great that many were hurt.

A MONSTROUS MISCARRIAGE

April 28th, 1746 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The wife of one Richard Haynes of Chelsea, aged 35, and mother of 16 fine children, was delivered of a monster with nose and eyes like a lyon, no palate to the mouth, hair on the shoulders, claws like a lion instead of fingers, no breast bone, something surprising out of the navel as big as an egg, and one foot longer than the other – she had been to see the lyons in the Tower where she was much terrified with the old lion's noise.

'Mrs. Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright. I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.' – Jane Austen. Letter to her sister, 1798.

DRAWN, HANGED AND QUARTERED

July 30th, 1746 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

About 11 o'clock were, pursuant to their sentences, conveyed on three hurdles from the new gaol Southwark to Kennington gallows, Francis Townley, George Fletcher, Thomas Chadwick, James Dawson, Thomas Deacon, John Barwick, Andrew Blood, Thomas Siddall and Thomas David Morgan. . . . A pile of faggots and a block were placed near the gallows; and while the prisoners were removing from the sledges into a cart drawn under the tree for that purpose, the faggots were set on fire, and the guards formed a

circle round the place of execution. When they had spent near an hour in their devotions, though not attended by any clergyman, they severally delivered the papers to the Sheriff and were soon after turned off: when they had hung about five minutes, Mr. Townley was cut down, his body (not being quite dead) being stripped and laid on the block, the hangman, with a cleaver, severed his head from his body, which were put into a coffin; then, taking out bowels and heart threw them into the fire: he then proceeded to the next, cutting them down, beheading, and disembowelling them one by one in the same manner as first; when that of the last was put into the fire, the executioner cried out 'God Save King George', at which the multitude of spectators gave a great shout, the heads and bodies were conveyed back in coffins to the prison from whence they came: they behaved in a manner suitable to their unhappy circumstances, all of them seeming calm and composed, though none shed tears. Three of their heads are to be set up, viz. Morgan's upon Temple Bar, Townley's at Carlisle, and Siddall's at Manchester.

Townley was buried in St Pancras Churchyard.

This barbarous occurrence took place where is now the Church of St Mark, Kennington.

It illustrates a passage in *Macbeth* where he says: 'As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.'

THE PRICE OF PROFANITY

September 23rd, 1746 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

A ticket porter brought before the Lord Mayor, paid 3/- for swearing, being the first convicted in London since the late Act commenced which has had very little effect.

'James I was a notorious user of bad language, and he must have had some twinge of conscience as he signed an Act in 1623 imposing a fine of twelvecence a time upon each swear or curse. This enactment gave impetus to the use of such emasculated profanities as "gadzooks", "zounds", "odds fish", and all other contractions of swear-words which are scattered through contemporary literature. James himself aided the currency of these queer forms, for on appeal by D'Avenant against a decision of the play licenser expunging such words from a manuscript, he held that "s'death" – a contraction of "God's death" – was a mere asseveration and not an oath at all. . . . Cursing is still illegal not under James's statute but under one of George II prescribing for each profanity a fine on a sliding scale, graduated not as one might have supposed according to the roundness of the oath but according to the station of the oath-taker. Modern economists will recognize in this still-living Act an instance of the well known principle of "charging what the traffic will bear". Here is the tariff:

Every day labourer, common soldier, common sailor, and common seaman, one shilling.

And every other person under the degree of a gentleman, two shillings.

And every person of or above the degree of a gentleman five shillings.

One could have a great deal of fun with this Act if one liked . . . and anyone who did not dislike lime-light could have a tremendous amount of entertainment for very little outlay by launching a prosecution under some Act like

this one against swearing. . . . A good plan would be to summon some actor who in a play had to utter upon the stage the words "damn" or "my God" or some such phrase. Whether "damn" would qualify I don't know; is it profane? One could make a nice little test case out of it.'

E. Stewart Fay,

Discoveries in the Statute Book. (1939.)

'Like so much legislation in the eighteenth century, the Act became almost a dead letter, and the Government lost a fine source of revenue. Swearing had become an ingrained habit. The Duke of Cambridge, coming out of Kew Church after listening to a discourse on the wickedness of swearing, remarked to his equerry that it was "a damned good sermon by Gad".'

Rosamond Bayne-Powell,

Eighteenth Century London Life. (1937.)

THE LAST BEHEADING

April 2nd, 1747 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The Sheriffs of London received a warrant in a letter from the Duke of Newcastle for the execution of Lord Lovat on the 9th, intimating that it was expected they would expose the head at the four corners of the scaffold as usual. The Sheriffs immediately returned an answer to His Grace, that, as it had not been practiced lately, they desired it might be inserted in the body of the warrant.

April 9th

Lord Lovat was beheaded on Tower Hill. Just before he came from the Tower, a scaffolding by the Ship ale house, near Barking Alley, built from that house in many stories, with near 1,000 persons on it, fell down all at once, by which eight or ten persons were killed on the spot, and many had their arms and legs broke. Among the killed were Mr. Hindman, of the Inspector's office; M. Goluney, Woollen draper in Black-Fryers; a servant to the King's Locksmith; Mr. James Johnson, just come from the West Indies, and three other men; ten persons died the next day of their bruises in the London Infirmary and St. Thomas's Hospital, as did the master carpenter of the scaffold and his wife, who was selling beer underneath when it fell.

Lord Lovat was the last person executed by axe in England. He was aged 80, and one of the Scotch noblemen captured after Culloden. The head was not exposed. He was buried in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London. The coffin plate is on the wall of that chapel, but until recently his name was not on the tablet on Tower Hill commemorating the earlier executions of the Earl of Kilmarnock and Lord Balmerino.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

July 11th, 1747 GENERAL ADVERTISER

On Monday next will certainly be play'd in the Artillery Ground, London, the match at CRICKET so long expected between the women of Charlton and Singleton, in Sussex, against the women of Westdean and Chilgrove, in the same county. It is to be hop'd, that the paying sixpence for admittance to this Match will not be taken amiss, the charges thereof amounting to upwards of Four-score Pound. Tickets for the Rooms and Gallery fronting the Ground to be had of Mr. Smith.

July 15th, 1747 GENERAL ADVERTISER

On Monday last in playing the Women's Cricket Match the Company broke in, so that it was impossible for the game to be play'd out; and some of them being very much frightened, and others hurt, it could not be finished till this Morning, when at Nine o'Clock they will finish the same, hoping the Company will be so kind as to indulge them in not walking within the Ring, which will not only be a great Pleasure to them, but a general Satisfaction to the Whole. All Gentlemen and Ladies that have paid to see this Match on Monday, shall have the Liberty of the Ground to see it finish'd without any other Charge. And in the Afternoon they will play a Second Match, in the same Place, several large Sums being depending between the Women of the Hills of Sussex, in Orange colour'd Ribbons, and those of the Dales,

in Blue. The Wickets to be pitch'd by One o'clock, and to begin Play by Two.

The result of this match, 'where were present the greatest number of spectators of both sexes ever seen at any public diversion', was not reported.

SAINT'S DAY AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

October 13th, 1747 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Being the anniversary of King Edward the Confessor, the tombs in Westminster Abbey were shut up by order of the Dean and Chapter to prevent the great concourse of Roman Catholics who always repair thither on that day. Notwithstanding which several of them were kneeling all the day at the gates, and paying their devotions to that saint.

*

1749-1848

*

LONDON'S LAST EARTHQUAKE

April 4th, 1750 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Incredible numbers of people being under strong apprehensions that London and Westminster would be visited with another and more fatal earthquake, on this night, according to the predictions of a crazy lifeguardsman and because it would be just four weeks from the last shock as that was from the first, left their houses and walked in the fields, or lay in boats all night; many people of fashion in the neighbouring villages sat in their coaches until daybreak; others went to a greater distance so that the roads were never more thronged, and lodging were hardly to be procured at Windsor; so far, and even to their wit's end, had the superstitious fears or their guilty conscience driven them.

This event figures prominently in many writers of the period.

Horace Walpole wrote from Arlington Street:

'Turner, a great Chinaman at the corner of next street has a jar cracked by the shock; he originally asked ten guineas for the pair; he now asks twenty, because it is the only jar in Europe that has been cracked by an earthquake.'

In another letter he wrote:

'This earthquake which has done no hurt in a country where no earthquake ever did any, is sent, according to Secker, Bishop of Oxford, to punish bawdy prints, bawdy books, gaming, drinking, and all other sins, natural or not, which he makes a principal ingredient in the composition of earthquakes.'

The *Gentleman's Magazine* published an article on 'Spiritual

improvements of earthquakes'. It opened: 'Earthquakes are evidently placed among those methods by which God punishes a rebellious and wicked people.'

W. E. H. Lecky (*History of England during the Eighteenth Century*) wrote:

'Chairs rocked, church bells rang in the steeples, the porcelain rattled on the shelves, and a loud rumbling noise was heard. On the second occasion the shock was greater than on the first; it was especially felt in the western portion of the city. Several chimneys fell. Large collections of china were thrown down and broken in the house of a private collector in Piccadilly, and in a china shop in St. James's Street. A maid in Charterhouse Street was flung out of her bed and broke her arm. The rarity of the event, and the fact that the shocks occurred with increased violence on the same day of two successive months, added to the panic.'

BURIAL OF AN EXECUTIONER

May 16th, 1752 COVENT GARDEN JOURNAL

On Monday evening the corpse of John Thrift, the late executioner, was brought in a hearse, without any coach to St. Paul's, Covent Garden, when it was attended by a great concourse of people who seemed so displeased with his being buried there that the attendants of the funeral, among whom was Tallis, the present hangman, were afraid that the body would be turned out of the coffin, which was therefore first carried into the church. However, about eight o'clock they got him interred.

A METHODIST IN MADNESS

June 21st, 1752 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

A substantial parishioner of Wandsworth, lately turned Methodist, pulled the Rev. Mr. Allison, minister of the parish, out of his pulpit; threw the cushion and the books out of the reading desk among the congregation: and did other mischief before he could be secured.

BURIAL OF A SUICIDE

August 27th, 1755 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

One Barlow a bookseller in Star Alley, Fenchurch Street, shot his child of two years old which died instantly and then himself in at the mouth, but the ball glancing sideways did not kill him. The inquest brought in the child's death wilful murder; upon which the father was committed to the compter, where after a few days, he died of the wound; and the jury upon the inquest found him guilty of *felo de se*. His friends took away the body and buried it; of which the Lord Mayor being informed, ordered it to be dug up, and put in a hole made for that purpose in the cross roads at the upper end of Moorfields, and a stake drove through the body. It appeared by a paper left behind him that, being hard-pressed by his creditors, who refused to give him time, he took this desperate method to put an end to all his troubles at once.

On December 30th, 1811, John Williams, murderer and suicide, was buried, with a stake through his body, at the junction of New Road and Cannon Street Road. This appears to be the last occasion when the full penalty was exacted (see under August 1886). In 1823 Abel Griffiths was buried at the junction of Eaton Street, Grosvenor Place, and Kings Road, but, says the report: 'The disgusting part of the ceremony of throwing lime over the body and driving a stake through it was dispensed with.' This had been abolished by an Act of Parliament of the same year.

A CURE FOR A WEN

April 19th, 1758 ANNUAL REGISTER

James White, aged 23, and Walter White, his brother, aged 21, were executed at Kennington Common for breaking open and robbing the dwelling house of farmer Vincent of Crawley. . . . While the unhappy wretches were hanging, a child about nine months old was put into the hands of the executioner who nine times, with one of the hands of each of the dead bodies, stroked the child over the face. It seems that the child had a wen on one of its cheeks, and that superstitious notion which has long prevailed of being touched is looked on as a cure.

The same superstition regarding another infliction is the theme of Thomas Hardy's story *The Withered Hand* (*Wessex Tales*, 1888). The executed criminal is seen to be the son of the husband of the afflicted woman, born out of wedlock. The latter and his mother meet alongside the corpse.

The *Annual Register* was founded by Robert Dodsley, in conjunction with Edmund Burke, in 1758. It still appears, but the 'Domestic occurrences', upon which this present book has largely drawn, are no longer a feature.

BEERY SUFFOCATION

May 30th, 1758 ANNUAL REGISTER

At a store cellar in Pall Mall, Mrs. Hucks's cooper and a chairman who went down after him were both suffocated by the steam of 40 butts of unstopped beer.

A FUNERAL RIOT

October 2nd, 1758 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The corpse of an undertaker and pawnbroker near Moorgate was interred in Islington churchyard, attended by a company of the artillery who were to perform the usual ceremony of firing over his grave, as he was a member of their body; but in the procession of the funeral a mob arose, and committed such enormous outrages, out of resentment to the deceased, that the clergyman who officiated had great difficulty to perform his office. It is said that he died worth several thousand pounds, and that he has left upwards of £200 to pay to the debtors in prison at his suit, a groat a day each for their maintenance, according to the Act of Parliament. The crowd was so great that several persons were much hurt.

LOW WATER

March 2nd, 1761 ANNUAL REGISTER

The flow of the tide was so little that the starlings at London Bridge were not covered at high water, a thing not known in the memory of man. Probably owing to an earthquake in some distant part of the globe.

The starlings were 'an outwork of piles, projecting in front of the lower part of a bridge, so as to form a protection against the force of the stream or to secure it from damage by the impact of vessels or floating objects'.

A PRETENDER GHOST

March 4th, 1761 ANNUAL REGISTER

A pretender ghost which has lately appeared in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, St. John's Churchyard, Millbank, Masham Street, etc., was seized on Wednesday evening and found to be a servant of one of the gentlemen belonging to the Abbey, wrapped up in a large white sheet with the corners hanging over his head in imitation of feathers. He had struck such a terror into the credulous inhabitants thereabouts that those who could not be brought to believe it a ghost entered into a subscription to give five guineas to the person who would seize him in order to remove the superstitious error adopted by their weak-minded neighbours.

Masham Street should be Marsham Street. There is the name – at the corner of Great Peter Street – with the date 1688. Earlier street name inscriptions are York Street, Covent Garden, 1633; James Street, 1673 (this is now Orange Street); Devereux Court, Strand, 1676.

A COW THAT COWED

May 4th, 1761 ANNUAL REGISTER

A little after two o'clock the people on the Royal Exchange were much alarmed by the appearance of a cow (hard driven from Smithfield) at the south gate and though the beast did not run in upon change great confusion ensued; some losing hats and wigs, and some their shoes, while others lay upon the ground in heaps with their limbs bruised, and during the alarm, a rumour of an earthquake prevailing, some threw themselves upon the ground, expecting to be swallowed up. The cow in the meantime, took down Sweeting's Alley, and was knocked down and secured by a carman in Gracechurch Street.

DEBT DODGING

June 3rd, 1761 ANNUAL REGISTER

While some young gentlemen were drinking lately at a tavern in Whitechapel one of them who happened to be considerably in debt was informed of two bailiffs loitering about the door; on which they held a council and came to a resolution to send for two men who lived just by, who were ordered to nail the two bailiffs by their clothes to the post which they leaned against; this being affected unperceived they gave the man a crown for their trouble, and, paying their reckoning, went out; when the bailiffs going to do their duty,

and attempting to move from their station in a hurry, each of them got a most violent fall on the stones, and before they could disengage themselves, the young gentlemen made off. The mob who gathered about the bailiffs were highly diverted with the affair.

A DRUNKEN DRIVER

November 2nd, 1761 ANNUAL REGISTER

Last night, between 11 and 12 o'clock, the following affair happened. A gentleman went into a hackney coach at Temple Bar, and ordered the coachman to drive him to Dockhead; but the coachman being in liquor, turned under Blackfriars Gateway, in Ludgate Street, drove to the bottom of Water Lane, down the flight of stone steps and on to the causeway; it luckily happened to be quite low water so that no accident ensued, but it was with great difficulty the horses got the coach up again, though all possible assistance was given them.

Water Lane is now Blackfriars Lane. There is still a flight of stone steps opposite its southern end. The causeway was probably Puddle Dock, still bearing that name. William Shakspeare, in 1613, bought a house in Blackfriars described in the conveyance as 'abutting upon a street leading down to Puddle Wharf'. (See also under April 26th, 1894.)

A FLEET RIVER FATALITY

January 15th, 1763 ANNUAL REGISTER

A man was found in Fleet Ditch standing upright and frozen to death. He had, it seems, unfortunately mistaken his way in the night, and slipped into the mud; and being in liquor could not disentangle himself.

The Fleet River had been covered in up to the foot of Ludgate Hill in 1737. The rest of the stream, from there to Blackfriars Bridge, was covered in in 1765.

THE WRATH OF THE WEAVERS

October 3rd, 1763 ANNUAL REGISTER

Several thousand journeymen weavers assembled in Spitalfields, and in a riotous and violent manner broke open the house of one of the masters, destroyed his looms, and cut a great quantity of rich silk to pieces, after which they placed his effigy in a cart with a halter about his neck, an executioner on one side and a coffin on the other; they then drove it through several streets, hanged it on a gibbet, and burnt it to ashes; which having proved a sufficient vent for their fury, they dispersed of themselves without further mischief.

ST BRIDE'S CHURCH SPIRE

June 18th, 1764 ANNUAL REGISTER

Happened in and about London one of the greatest thunderstorms in the memory of man. Some buildings suffered by it, particularly the elegant spire of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, which was shattered so much that it was obliged to be rebuilt. Several balls of fire were seen in the streets at the same time, but soon disappeared without doing any mischief. Some persons, however, were hurt by the stones that flew from the damaged buildings.

In rebuilding the spire it lost eight feet in height. It is now 226 feet high instead of 234 feet.

Alas! 'balls of fire', from German incendiary bombs, on the night of Sunday, December 29th, 1940, did very great mischief, and Wren's fine church is but a shell. The spire is intact.

EATING FOR CASH

April, 1765 ANNUAL REGISTER

A lad of fifteen years old apprenticed to a carman in Whitechapel, eat, at a public house for a wager of two guineas, seven pounds of beef steaks, all solid meat, a large quartern loaf, and drank two quarts of porter. He had two hours allowed him to finish this his supper, but devoured the whole in less than an hour and a half.

LAID OUT AND ALIVE

April 1765 ANNUAL REGISTER

A few days ago Mrs. Merrit, in Bull and Mouth Street, aged between 60 and 70, after being laid out as dead two or three days, showed some symptoms of life and is since perfectly recovered. This is one instance among many of the great danger there is of killing people in good earnest, by stripping and laying them out; and, what is still more shocking to think of, burying them alive, by committing them too hastily to their coffins. Putrefaction is the only sure sign of death in many cases.

A WEALTHY BEGGAR

August 1765 ANNUAL REGISTER

In Kent Street, Southwark, John Cornwall, age 91, known by the name of the cripple of Kent, who, though a common beggar for more than 60 years past, left a woman whom he called his wife, upward of 400 guineas in gold and a considerable sum in silver.

This incident is reminiscent of Conan Doyle's well-known story, *The Man With the Twisted Lip*. This gentleman said: 'My dear wife knew that I had business in the City. She little knew what.'

A COSTLY DEFEAT

May 19th, 1766 ANNUAL REGISTER

A severe battle was fought between a lamp-lighter and a baker in Bunhill Fields which lasted one hour and five minutes, when the latter was obliged to yield to his antagonist with the loss of an eye and four guineas; the sum agreed to be paid the conqueror.

A RESURRECTION STONE

June 18th, 1766 ANNUAL REGISTER

Over the gateway of the Poor's house in Shoe Lane, belonging to St. Andrew's, Holborn, which is rebuilt and finished, there is now replaced a group of carving in stone on the resurrection, which formerly was in the old buildings; although taken notice of by few, it is reckoned very curious, and highly executed; and was done before the Reformation; and except that inimitable piece of sculpture placed across the north gate of the churchyard of St. Giles in the Fields, is not to be equalled in England.

This 'carving in stone' (it was not of pre-Reformation date but *c.* 1680) was later removed to the church of St Andrew, Holborn, and can still be seen in the north wall of the ruined building. In the graveyard adjoining the 'Poor's house', Thomas Chatterton was buried in 1770. In 1937, during excavations in Shoe Lane, many skulls were unearthed. A workman piled them up and chalked on a board 'Now where is fame'; yet it is hardly likely that he had heard of Thomas Chatterton.

TRAYING OVER THE THAMES

July 5th, 1766 ANNUAL REGISTER

Saturday, at eight o'clock in the evening, the man who laid a wager to cross the Thames in a butcher's tray, set out in the same from Somerset Stairs, and reached the Surrey shore with great ease, using nothing but his hands; he had on a cork jacket in case of any accident. It is said £1,400 was depending on this affair, and upwards of 70 boats full of spectators were present.

A GRATUITOUS POST

July 10th, 1766 ANNUAL REGISTER

We are assured that the place of head keeper of Wood Street Compter, to which Mr. John Kirbey was lately appointed by Sheriffs Trecothick and Kennet, was to those gentlemen's great honour given entirely gratis, although they, as their predecessors were heretofore accustomed, have sold the same for 1,500 pounds. A noble example, and worthy imitation in the disposal of all city places, but especially such as are connected with the administration of justice.

VESTED INTERESTS

November 19th, 1766 ANNUAL REGISTER

The new temporary bridge was opened at Blackfriars to the no small mortification of the watermen, who cannot help complaining of this precipitate expedient to deprive them of their bread at this hard time. Many of us, say the old men, may be dead before the stone bridge can be finished, and it is hard to starve us before our time by a wooden one.

The opposition of watermen was largely responsible for the extraordinary fact that London had only one bridge until 1750, when Westminster Bridge was erected.

A MURDERER'S MISCARRIAGE

February 1767 ANNUAL REGISTER

A man who lodged in Earl Street, Seven Dials, went home in expectation of having his dinner ready, but found his wife on the bed intoxicated with liquor; on which he placed a train of gunpowder, with the diabolical resolution to blow her up, but in setting fire to the flame he was so terribly burnt that he was carried to the hospital with little hopes of recovery. The woman escaped unhurt.

A MERCENARY MATCH

February 1767 ANNUAL REGISTER

Jo Story, a blacksmith at Belford, having courted the daughter of Mrs. Eleanor Elliott, widow, near Haggerston, going one day to her house to ask for his sweetheart, found none but the old woman who told him her daughter was not at home, but asked him why he courted her daughter, who could not bring him above £20, and if he would please her she would help him to one of £500 on which he replied he would ever with gratitude acknowledge the favour. Then I am the person (says she) if you'll accept of the offer; on which a bargain was struck immediately, and on Tuesday se'n night they were married at Killo. The bridegroom is only 18 years of age and the bride 64.

It would require the pen of a writer like Thomas Hardy to deal faithfully with the daughter's reactions. We may assume that the bride would have then lived to a vexatious old age, whilst the bridegroom carried on with the daughter whom he had hoped soon to make his second wife.

A WALKING CORPSE

February 1767 ANNUAL REGISTER

On Thursday died (as was supposed) Mrs. Margaret Carpenter, journeywoman to Mr. Smith, livery lace maker in Little Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields; and on Friday she was properly laid out, in order to be interred to-morrow; when on Friday night, to the astonishment and terror of the whole family, she came downstairs stark naked, having only been in a trance; as soon as the surprise was over, they put her into a warm bed, and gave her comfortable things for her refreshment; she said she was bitter cold; but her situation so shocked her that she did not survive above a day or two.

A FLOOD

June 4th, 1767 ANNUAL REGISTER

An uncommon inundation happened in the road between Kennington and Clapham occasioned by the heavy rains that had been falling for three days before; the waters collected in the road, meeting with a high tide running up Vauxhall creek, swelled to such a degree that they soon covered Kennington Common and, entering some low grounds (on the south side), destroyed the brick works. The current making its way S.E. and over Camberwell Road by Wallworth Common to the Thames, a poor woman happening to be on Kennington Common before the height of the flood got on to the bank above the turnpike house and a workman in the garden close by going to assist her over the road, in stepping off the bank, her feet slipped and she, falling, pulled the poor man into the current with her; and both were carried through an arch under the turnpike house but two feet wide and three deep. The woman was soon discovered by her cloaths, but the man was carried forty yards before seen. However both being taken into a house, they soon recovered.

Kennington Common was where is now **Kennington Park**, opened in 1852. The centenary of the opening of the Park was commemorated in September 1952, with an old-time cricket match.

AN ANIMAL'S AVARICE

August 16th, 1767 ANNUAL REGISTER

A tradesman's son in St. Martin's, passing through Duke's Court with a bank note in his hand, began to play carelessly with the goats belonging to the mews, when one of them nibbled the bank note out of the lad's hand and swallowed it.

This was the King's Mews, which stood on the site of the National Gallery before Trafalgar Square was laid out. The building was demolished in 1829.

A remarkable modern parallel was the following:

SAVINGS EATEN BY NEIGHBOURS' GOAT

RIVAL CLAIMS TO £6

From our Correspondent

The annual report of the Northern Rhodesian Government Native Affairs Department, tells the story of John Ishamacai, six £1 notes, and a goat.

Ishamacai lives in Makomas village in the remote Kalabo district of Northern Rhodesia. Over a period of months he saved £6 in coins of small denomination. When they became unwieldy Ishamacai changed the money into six new £1 notes and buried them in a box under the floor of his hut. During heavy rains he dug up the box when the hut became damp and found that the notes were wet and badly damaged. Ishamacai then spread the notes in the sun to dry outside his hut. A neighbour's goat passing the hut stopped to investigate and ate Ishamacai's savings.

Ishamacai demanded that the neighbour summarily execute the goat. When the neighbour refused Ishamacai cut the animal's throat and extracted from the stomach

the masticated but undigested notes. These he took to Kalabo post office and demanded six new £1 notes in exchange.

The annual report does not state whether the authorities have yet refunded the money, but Ishamacai's goat-bereaved neighbour complained to the Government authorities in the Kalabo area. He is reported to have begun proceedings against Ishamacai for the unauthorized slaughter of one healthy if inquisitive goat and to be claiming as damage six £1 notes.

The Times, September 25th, 1952.

BODY-SNATCHING

November 26th, 1767 ST JAMES'S CHRONICLE

The Burying-Ground in Oxford Road, belonging to the Parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, having been lately robbed of several dead bodies, a Watch was placed there, attended by a large mastiff dog, notwithstanding which on Sunday last some villains found means to steal out another dead body and carried off the very dog.

This graveyard still remains. It is north of the Bayswater Road, about 300 yards from Marble Arch and behind the Chapel of the Ascension, badly damaged by bombs. Here the grave of Laurence Sterne, who died in 1768, can be found on the west side. There is reason to believe that his body was taken away by the 'resurrection men'; it is said to have been recognized at an anatomical demonstration in Cambridge. (See the present writer's *London Worthies*.) See also under September 26th, 1769.

AN ACCIDENT AT LONDON BRIDGE

January 1768 ANNUAL REGISTER

Three men were jammed in a boat between a large body of ice near the starlings at London Bridge from about eight o'clock in the morning till past four in the afternoon, when at the return of the tide, the men all happily got on there. A bottle of brandy and some tobacco were conveyed to these poor men by means of a rope from the top of the balustrade at London Bridge.

UNBURIED FOR NINETEEN YEARS

July 11th, 1768 ANNUAL REGISTER

A woman was buried in St. George, Hanover Square, who had been dead 19 years. The reason of her being so long unburied was some years ago a near relation of hers died, and left her £25 per annum as long as she remained upon earth as expressed in the will. Her surviving husband rented a little room over a stable near South Audley Street for £5 per annum, and there she has remained in a very decent coffin all that time. The husband being dead, the landlord of the room wanted to make an alteration upon which the coffin was discovered. Thus the husband had £20 per annum for keeping a dead and quiet wife upon earth.

Obviously the bequest meant so long as the woman lived. It is surprising that an executor of the will or some other representative of 'the near relation' did not make periodical inquiries as to whether she was alive. For the case of a woman who remained unburied for 166 years, see under October 21st, 1775.

THE GRAVE-DIGGER ENGRAVED

September 19th, 1769 ANNUAL REGISTER

The gravedigger of St. Catherine Cree in Leadenhall Street, being employed to open a grave for the body of Mrs. Osborne lately deceased, before he began laid a wager that he would dig it ten feet deep, but just as he had finished it, it fell in and caught him up to the middle, from which several people endeavoured to extricate him, but in vain, for the rottenness of the ground not being able to bear so much weight, the earth gave way a second time, and the poor man was smothered.

A PIONEER OF CREMATION

September 26th, 1769 ST JAMES'S CHRONICLE

The corpse of the late Mrs. Pratt, which was buried in the new ground near Paddington, was burnt to ashes in the grave by means of un-slacked Lime, agreeable to her will.

This was the graveyard (in Bayswater Road) in which The Rev. Laurence Sterne was buried. (See under November 26th, 1767.) A monument was erected to this lady who 'believing that the vapours arising from the graves in the churchyard of populous cities will prove hurtful to the inhabitants, ordered that her body should be burned in hopes that others would follow the example'. According to a correspondent of *Notes and Queries* in 1891, the monument (which still exists, although the inscription is hardly legible) was not erected until 1812. This was surprisingly long after Mrs Pratt's death, and perhaps there was an error in the date. She was well connected. *The Middlesex Journal*, which reported the interment but said nothing about burning, said she was the daughter of Sir Henry Brooke, Bart., and of an ancient family in Yorkshire. She was grand-daughter of Sir Hardress Waller, aunt of the present Countess Dowager of Shelburne, and grandmother of Sir George Saville and the Countess of Scarborough. She married John Pratt, Esq, of the Kingdom of Ireland, who, in the reign of Queen Anne, was appointed Vice-Treasurer there, an office which was continued to him by King George the First who also appointed him Constable of the Castle of Dublin. Some time after his death she became intimately acquainted with the late Duchess of Buckingham who at her death left Mrs Pratt a considerable fortune; and the late Earl of Sherborne, her cousin german, also bequeathed her a large annuity. This is the only case known in England of cremation until 1884, when a Dr William Price cremated the body of his son in his garden at Llantrisant in Wales. This being held legal by the dictum of His Honour Judge Stephen, the first crematorium was then opened.

A MUCH-WIVED MAN

September 28th, 1769 PUBLIC ADVERTISER

A few days ago died at Chelsea, aged 90, Mr. Henry Tutop, formerly a coach master and stable keeper, worth £12,000. The Deceased had married 13 wives, the last of whom had died five months ago in the 46th year of her age.

This is surely a record and leaves Henry VIII far behind. It tries one's credulity. Perhaps somebody was guessing. If the number was thirteen, it might have given cause for suspicion. At the same time it must be remembered that the expectation of life was much less in the eighteenth century than now and death through childbirth much more frequent.

BODY-SNATCHING

February 12th, 1770 ANNUAL REGISTER

Five of the eleven capital convicts were this day executed at Tyburn. The other six were reprieved.

After the execution a great disturbance happened in consequence of a hearse being placed near the gallows in order to receive the body of Dunk the soldier, which some of his comrades imagining was sent there by the surgeons, they knocked down the undertaker and after beating his men, drove off with the body along the New Road, attended by a prodigious concourse of people, till they came to the end of Gray's Inn Lane where they buried the corpse after first breaking its legs and arms, and throwing a large quantity of unslacked lime into the coffin and the grave.

RIVER HIGHWAYMEN

June 6th, 1770 ANNUAL REGISTER

Between 11 and 12 o'clock at night three gentlemen and two ladies returning from Vauxhall by water, were boarded by six men who had their faces covered with black crape about 200 yards above Westminster Bridge who demanded their money without any hesitation or they would throw them overboard. They took from the company near £20 besides two watches, and immediately rowed up the river.

A CENTENARIAN WITH A STORY

June 22nd, 1770 PUBLIC ADVERTISER

Mr. John Hatfield, who died last Monday, at his house in Glasshouse Yard, Aldersgate, aged 102 years, was a soldier in the reign of William and Mary, and the person who was tried and condemned by a Court-Martial for falling asleep on his duty upon the terrace at Windsor. He absolutely denied the charge against him, and solemnly declared that he heard St. Paul's clock strike 13; the truth of which was much doubted by the Court, because of the great distance. But whilst he was under sentence of death, an affidavit was made by several persons that the clock actually did strike 13 instead of 12; whereupon he received His Majesty's pardon. The above his friends caused to be engraved on his plate, to satisfy the world of the truth of a story which has been much doubted, though he had often confirmed it to many gentlemen, and a few days before his death told it to several of his neighbours. He enjoyed his sight and memory to the day of his death.

The death of Hatfield is not noticed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but, curiously, in the same month, there was announced the death of Ann Hatfield at Tinsley (Yorks) at the age of 105. What is meant by 'his plate'? There would be no publicity by engraving a coffin plate.

SHORT AND SIMPLE ANNALS OF THE POOR

February 18th, 1771 ANNUAL REGISTER

A poor boy who on Tuesday night had crept into a dunghill at a stable yard in Holborn in order to preserve himself from the cold was found dead by the ostler.

A poor woman also, with a child at her breast, and another about three years old lying by her was found in Rag Fair.

AN APRIL FOOL'S ESCAPADE

April 1st, 1771 ANNUAL REGISTER

Two carts filled with persons intended to represent some imaginary criminals of rank, which were followed by a hearse, went through the City to Tower Hill. In the first cart was a chimney sweeper who acted the part of a clergyman. When they arrived the person in the first cart was pretendedly beheaded, then put into the hearse and carried off. In the second cart were some stuffed figures which, after hanging and the heads chopped off were burnt amidst the huzzas of the mob.

PLAYING AT EXECUTIONS

April 5th, 1771 ANNUAL REGISTER

About noon two carts preceded by a hearse were drawn through the City to Tower Hill. In the first cart sat a man representing an executioner having the care of three figures painted on paste board, near as large as life, hanging on a wooden frame in form of a gallows, which reached right across the cart. In the front the figures were painted with nightcaps on, and handkerchiefs over their eyes, on their backs were written in large characters the names of two persons of rank and an alderman: in the second cart were four figures painted, and hanging in the same manner, with names also on their backs, when the carts etc. arrived at Tower Hill, the gallows were fixed up, and in a short time after the figures and gallows were set on fire and consumed.

A man in the crowd being observed taking down the names written on the backs of the figures was seized as a spy, and ducked in the Tower ditch till he was almost dead, though he assured the mob that he copied them only to satisfy his own curiosity.

STONED TO DEATH

April 16th, 1771 ANNUAL REGISTER

Yesterday, between four and five o'clock a mob assembled in a field near Bethnal Green consisting of upwards of two thousand, when they set upon one Clark, a pattern drawer, who was the principal evidence against the two cutters that were executed at Bethnal Green sometime since; they continued pelting him with brick-bats for three hours which laid his skull entirely open. Never did any poor mortal suffer more than he did; he begged of them several times to shoot him; but they kept stoning him till he died in the greatest agonies. Six or seven are said to be taken into custody on this account.

That an attack of this kind could proceed for three hours is an astonishing example of the inadequate policing in the eighteenth century.

CUT OFF WITH A SHILLING

September 8th, 1772 ANNUAL REGISTER

In the will of John G. . . . E. . . . who died at Lambeth a short time since is the following very remarkable clause: 'whereas it was my misfortune to be made very uneasy by Elizabeth G. . . . E. . . . my wife, for many years from our marriage, by her turbulent behaviour; for she was not content with despising my admonitions, but she contrived every method to make me unhappy, she was so persevering in her nature that she would not be reclaimed, but seemed only to be born to be a plague to me; the strength of Sampson, the knowledge of Homer, the prudence of Augustus, the cunning of Pyrrhus,¹ the patience of Job, the subtlety of Hannibal, and the watchfulness of Hermogenes,² could not have been sufficient to subdue her; for no skill or force in the world would make her good; and as we have lived separate and apart from each other eight years, and she having perverted her son to leave and totally abandon me, therefore I give her one shilling only.'

¹ Pyrrhus was a military adventurer, who carried on a series of campaigns against Rome and in Sicily 280–275 B.C.

² Hermogenes was a rhetorician of the second century. He was celebrated for precocity, but it does not appear that he was an example of watchfulness. There is no obvious comparison in either case.

AN EQUALITARIAN

January 9th, 1773 MORNING CHRONICLE AND
LONDON ADVERTISER

Thursday night some villains robbed the Kentish Town stage, and stripped the passengers of their money, watches and buckles. In their hurry they spared the pockets of Mr. Corbyn, the druggist; but he content to have neighbour's fare, called out to one of the rogues 'Stop friend, you have forgot to take my money'.

REMOVAL OF SEVEN DIALS

July 10th, 1773 MORNING CHRONICLE AND
LONDON ADVERTISER

The removal of that great public ornament the Seven Dials (or, as the French refugees of the quarter used to call it, *La Pyramide*), and the discontent it has occasioned, will, it's thought, make the Commissioners, or their deputies, more cautious how they take such liberties again, either from false economy, secret avarice, or partial complaint. It is certain the nuisance complained of is not thereby removed: the centre where the column stood being a rendezvous for blackguards etc., as much as ever; but alas! the elegant angle seen from seven different avenues is and will be no more, unless it rises again in some or one of the Commissioners' or Surveyors' gardens, or sinks into somebody's pocket, while a wide dreary and naked prospect of the blackguards etc. only remains.

It stood where is now the junction of Monmouth Street, Mercer Street, Earlham Street and Short's Gardens. It was removed on account of a rumour that the pillar concealed treasure. The stones were purchased by a stonemason, and removed to a place called Sayes Court, near Chertsey. In 1822 the column was set up on Weybridge Green, and surmounted with a ducal coronet, as a memorial to the Duchess of York who had died at Oatlands in 1820. It is still there. The name 'Seven Dials' is now to be seen only over a curiosity shop on the west side of Monmouth Street.

HANGED AND BURNED

September 13th, 1773 ANNUAL REGISTER

This morning Elizabeth Herring who was convicted last Friday at the Old Bailey of the wilful murder of her husband (who plied as a waterman at Wapping Stairs) by stabbing him with a case knife in the throat in a quarrel while they were at dinner at a public house in King Street, Wapping, was carried on a sledge drawn by four horses from Newgate to Tyburn. She confessed that her husband died by the wound she gave him in her passion, to which she was very subject; but declared she had no intention of murdering him, and seemed to be entirely resigned to her unhappy fate. The method of executing this unfortunate woman was as follows: she was placed on a stool something more than two feet high, and a chain being placed under her arms, the rope round her neck was made fast by two spikes, which being driven through a post against which she stood, when her devotions were ended, the stool was taken from under her, and she was soon strangled. When she had hung about fifteen minutes the rope was burnt, and she sunk till the chain supported her, forcing her hands up to the level of her face and the flames being furious she was soon consumed. The crowd was so immensely great, that it was a long time before the faggots could be placed for execution.

It was computed that there were above 20,000 people to see this melancholy spectacle, many of whom were much hurt and some trodden to death in gratifying a barbarous curiosity.

See also June 26th, 1788.

EDWARD I's CORPSE EXAMINED

May 2nd, 1774 ANNUAL REGISTER

Some gentlemen of the Society of Antiquaries, being desirous to see how far the actual state of Edward I's body answered to the methods to preserve it, obtained leave to open the large stone sarcophagus, in which it was deposited, on the north side of Edward the Confessor's Chapel. This was accordingly done this morning, when, in a coffin of yellow stone, they found the royal body, in perfect preservation, wrapt in two wrappers, one of them of gold tissue, strongly waxed, and fresh; the outermost more decayed. The corpse was habited in a rich mantle of purple, paned with white, and adorned with ornaments of gilt metal, studded with red and blue stones and pearls. Two similar ornaments lay on his hands. The mantle was fastened on the right shoulder by a magnificent fibula of the same metal, with the same stones and pearls. His face had over it a silken covering, so fine, and so closely fitted to it, as to preserve the features entire. Round his temples was a gilt coronet of *fleur de lys*. In his hands, which were also entire, were two sceptres of gilt metal; that in the right surmounted by a *Cross Fleuri*, that in the left by three clusters of oak leaves, and a dove on a globe; this sceptre was about five feet long. The feet were enveloped in the mantle and other coverings, but sound, and the toes distinct. The whole length of the corpse was six feet two inches. . . . Edward I died at Burgh upon Sands in Cumber-land, on his way to Scotland, July 7, 1307, in the 68th year of his age.

A DOGGY DETECTION

February 26th, 1775 ANNUAL REGISTER

As some persons were going through Moorfields a dog belonging to one of them was observed to scratch at a particular place; and his master not being able to get him from it, they had the ground opened; when the body of an infant just buried was found with its legs cut off and lying by the body.

AN EMBALMED WIFE

October 21st, 1775 ST JAMES'S CHRONICLE

Van Butchell (not willing to be unpleasantly circumstanced, and wishing to convince some good minds that have been misinformed) acquaints the Curious, no stranger can see his embalmed Wife, unless by a Friend personally introduced to himself, any day between Nine and One, Sundays excepted.

The embalmed body of Mrs Van Butchell, arrayed in fine linen and lace, was kept in her husband's sitting-room. In due course he married again. The second Mrs Van Butchell had no liking for the company of the first wife, so her husband dispatched the corpse to the Royal College of Surgeons. There she remained until, having been unburied for 165 years, she was bombed out of existence in 1941. When a party, conducted by the present writer, saw her about 1931, she was in her 'birthday suit'. (See also under July 15th, 1797.)

PREMATURE BURIAL

July 23rd, 1776 ANNUAL REGISTER

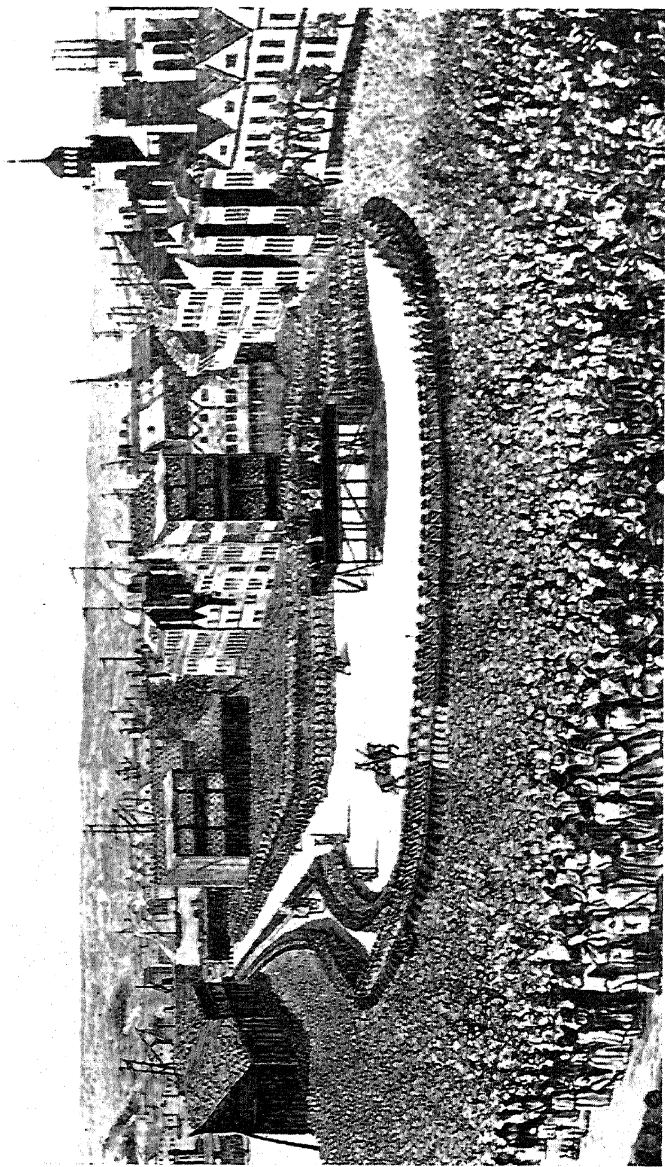
The body of a coachman found without any of the common signs of life . . . in a stable at Fulham to which he went a few days before in a seeming state of good health to put up his horses, was buried at that place. But when the funeral was over, a person insisting that during the performance of the service he heard a rumbling and struggling in the coffin, the earth was removed, and the coffin taken out of the grave; when, on opening it their appeared evident proofs that the unhappy man, though then absolutely dead, had come to himself as his body was very much bruised in several places some of which were still bleeding, and there appeared besides a quantity of blood in the coffin.

PURLOINING PILLS

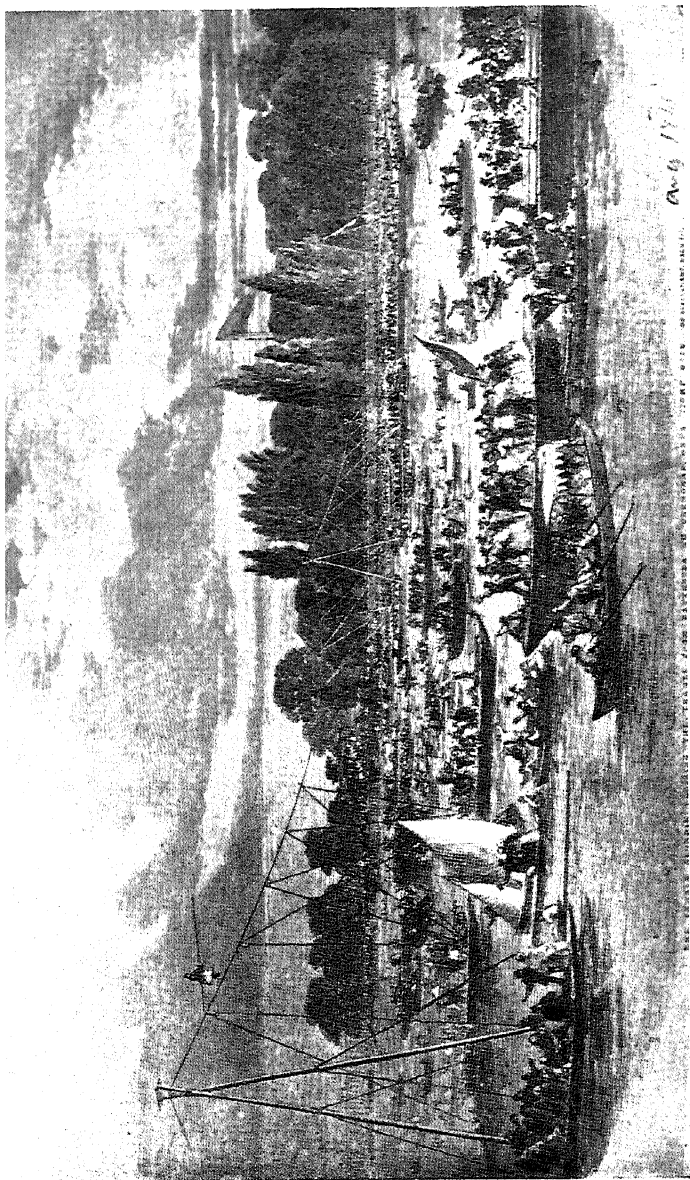
December 13th, 1778 ANNUAL REGISTER

On Thursday night last as Mr. Sharp, Chymist, stopped in his carriage at his door in Bishopsgate Street, 5 villains observed a box in the coach and whilst Mr. Sharp was getting out they took the opportunity on the opposite side to take it away with which they got clear off. The contents of the box were mercurial pills, lozenges, sugar plumbs, etc., of which the thieves had fed so plentifully besides several others they had given them to, that, finding themselves strangely affected by the pills, and apprehending they were all poisoned, they yesterday sent a boy to Mr. Williams, Chymist, in Smock Alley, Petticoat Lane, with the box, pills, etc. Mr. Williams being acquainted with the affair from Mr. Sharp, very properly detained the boy who impeached his companions; and a sufficient number of constables being obtained, they went into Petticoat Lane and secured as desperate a covey of thieves as perhaps ever herded together who were, from the large doses they had swallowed, in as wretched a condition as ever were a nest of poisoned rats. Several of them were yesterday committed to prison.

In 1945 *Reynolds News* reported that 'two hundred tablets, each a fatal dose, have been stolen from a veterinary surgeon's home in Shardeloes Road, New Cross. They were in eight glass tubes $3\frac{1}{2}$ in long and were labelled "Tenoban". An urgent notice broadcast last night, calling attention to the dangerous nature of the drugs was issued by the police.'



The execution of the Earl of Kilmarnock and Lord Balmerino on Tower Hill (1746)



A female Blondin

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY (IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

May 22nd, 1779 ANNUAL REGISTER

Messrs Kelly, Lindley, Carter, Hill, Durell and another, six Westminster schoolboys, were likewise tried for an assault on a man in Dean's Yard, Westminster, in January last when they beat and wounded him in a most shocking manner, and after that Kelly, with a drawn knife in his hand said: 'If you don't kneel down and ask pardon, I will rip you up', which the man was compelled to do to save his life.

Hill and Durrell pleaded 'Not Guilty', the rest pleaded 'Guilty'. Hill was acquitted for want of evidence, and Durrell found guilty, but fined only 1s, on a doubt of his being a principal among these polite young ruffians. The facts being fully proved, the other four were sentenced to a month's imprisonment in Bridewell, and £100 fine to be paid among them; but if they would in Court ask the Prosecutor's pardon on their knees, as they had compelled him to ask theirs, the Court would take off the imprisonment; they absolutely refused asking pardon on their knees. The sentence stood thus for about an hour, when the father of Carter . . . applied to the Court and told them his son was elected to Christ College, Oxford, and must go there in a few days, or lose the benefit of that election. On this the Court took off his imprisonment.

This being done, some of the magistrates moved that the rest might have their imprisonment taken off also. This was strongly opposed

by the Chairman, Sir John Hawkins, and several other justices, but on a division it was carried to take off the imprisonment, nine against seven.

They were then directed to make the Prosecutor satisfaction, and he said, as he had before offered to take £50 besides his costs, he would take it then. The friends of the boys paid the Prosecutor in Court £50 and Mr. Denton, his attorney, £20 for the costs who, to his honour, carried on the prosecution with a spirit due to the atrocious barbarity of the petty classical bravoës.

Sir John Hawkins was the executor and biographer of Dr Johnson. He is buried in the north walk of the cloisters of Westminster Abbey with only his initials J. H. on his grave.

If the boys had been poor there would have been no bargaining with justice. There would probably have been imposed a term of imprisonment with Mr Wackford Squeers's medicine at intervals.

WHOSE LEGS?

August 26th, 1779 ANNUAL REGISTER

Last week a labourer, in digging for the foundation of the intended portico for the Archbishop of Canterbury's grand entrance to his park near Lambeth Church, found a trunk, to appearance like the case of a fowling piece, when packed up for exportation, which contained the leg bones of a man, together with a curious antique shoe; and notwithstanding the bones, after being exposed to the air, fell to dust, the shoe, though leather, still remained perfect and intire. It is supposed by the gentlemen of the Antiquarian Society to have been the leg bones of the Rev. Mr. Rogers whose leg from being loaded with a heavy chain during his imprisonment at the time of the confinement of the Bishops Hooper, Ridley, and Latimer in the Archbishop of Canterbury's tower, near about the recantation of Archbishop Cranmer, had mortified and was cut off. This happened in the year 1555, in the reign of Queen Mary.

The 'gentlemen of the Antiquarian Society' were guessing. Rogers was imprisoned in Newgate Gaol. Cranmer may, for a short time, have been a prisoner in Lambeth Palace. The other three cannot be associated with it.

THE HANGING OF WILLIAM KENT

January 19th, 1780 ANNUAL REGISTER

This day the following malefactors were executed at Tyburn pursuant to the sentence: Hugh Mulvey, John Whiley and John Woodmore, who went in the first cart, for breaking open the house of Thomas Farley of Coldbath Fields and stealing thereout two silk gowns, two pair of stays, and other things; John Howell, for stealing 352 silk handkerchiefs and other goods to a considerable amount, in the house of Mr. Davison, pawnbroker, in Bishopsgate Street; and William Kent, for robbing Henry Otto, one of His Majesty's messengers of his watch and money, on the highway near Gunnersbury Lane, who went in the last cart. They were attended by the sheriffs, City marshals, officers, the ordinary of Newgate etc. from Newgate to the place of execution. They behaved exceedingly penitent, wept much, and were terribly agitated and shocked at their approaching dissolution.

The above unfortunate youths were all very young, the eldest not exceeding 23 years of age.

It is astonishing that some writers will still maintain that boys of quite tender years were hanged. In the *British Weekly*, in January 1953, there was an article entitled 'The Young Delinquent', by John S. Mackenzie. The astonishing statement was made that 'as recently as 1883 a Nicholas White, aged 9, was sentenced at the Old Bailey to be hanged for stealing twopenceworth of paint. He was reprieved. But there was no reprieve for a child of 10 who had stolen a small article from a shop on Ludgate Hill, and was tried at the Old Bailey and hanged'.

The youngest victim of an executioner I have been able

to trace was John Bell. He was 13 when hanged at Maidstone in 1831. As he had stabbed another boy to death his fate is not surprising. He would probably not have been hanged for anything less than murder.

This question was the subject of correspondence in *Notes and Queries*, instigated by me, and there was no denial of my statement as to the youngest person to be hanged. No doubt sentence was often passed, but reprieve followed.

A DICKENS CHARACTER

July 3rd, 1780 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Edward Dennis, better known by the name of Jack Ketch, was tried for assisting in pulling down the house of Mr. Boggis in New Turnstyle. The prisoner admitted the fact, but pleaded compulsion, the mob swearing that they would burn him if he did not assist them in burning the goods. He was found guilty, but recommended to mercy, and has a bailable warrant, which will be sued out when the executions are ended. The humanity of Mr. Smith, the keeper of Tothill Fields, Bridewell, to whose custody he was committed, deserves due praise. He declined confining him among the other prisoners lest his obnoxious character should expose him to their rage.

Edward Dennis is one of the characters in *Barnaby Rudge*. There we leave him awaiting execution. The real Dennis was reprieved, and a waggish writer wrote:

‘He contracts for ropes
and lives in hopes
of being reinstated.’

He was only reinstated owing to the inefficiency of his successor.

DIED OF LAUGHING

April 19th, 1782 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Deaths. Mrs. Fitzherbert, relict of the late Mr. Fitzherbert of Northamptonshire. On the Wednesday evening before her death this lady went to Drury Lane Theatre, in company with some friends, to see *The Beggar's Opera*. On Mr. Bannister making his appearance in the character of Polly, the whole audience were thrown into an uproar of laughter; unfortunately the actor's whimsical appearance had a fatal effect on Mrs. Fitzherbert; she could not suppress the laugh that seized her on the first view of this enormous representation; and before the second act was over she was obliged to leave the theatre. Mrs. Fitzherbert, not being able to banish the figure from her memory, was thrown into hysterics which continued without intermission until Friday morning when she expired.

Pickwick Papers came near to a similar effect. Moncure Conway in his *Autobiography* said:

'Our neighbour, Douglas Gordon, broke a small blood-vessel laughing over *Pickwick*, and we pitied him, not for the lesion, but because his doctor forbade him to read *Pickwick*.'

THE ONLY BISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

March 27th, 1783 ANNUAL REGISTER

This evening the late Archbishop of Canterbury was buried at Lambeth when a coffin found in the grave where he is interred proves by the inscription to be one of the Bishops of Ely who lived in the reign of Queen Mary and died in that of Elizabeth. The date of the coffin plate is 1570 which makes it 213 years since his interment; the body and cloths were perfectly found; the corpse had a hat under one arm and a hat on the head.

The Archbishop was Cornwallis who had been Primate since 1768.

The Bishop of Ely was Thirlby. He was the first and only Bishop of Westminster, 1540-50. He was at the last date transferred to Norwich by Edward VI and in 1554, by Queen Mary (he having recanted his Protestantism) to Ely. He was deposed by Elizabeth, and placed in honourable captivity in Lambeth Palace. Of his life here, Bishop Godwin said he enjoyed 'more pleasure in this time of his imprisonment than ever heretofore, in the midst and fullest stream of his highest honours'. He is commemorated by a brass tablet in the chancel of Lambeth Church.

THROWING A GIANT TO A WHALE

June 1st, 1783 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Deaths. — In Cockspur Street, Charing Cross, aged only 22, Mr. Charles Byrne, the famous Irish Giant whose death is said to have been precipitated by excessive drinking to which he was always addicted, but more particularly since his late loss of almost all his property which he had simply invested in a single Bank note of £700. In his last moments (it has been said) he requested that his ponderous remains might be thrown into the sea, in order that his bones might be placed far out of the reach of the chirurgical fraternity; in consequence of which the body was shipped on board a vessel to be conveyed to the Downs, to be sunk in 20 fathom water. We have reason, however, to believe that this report is merely a tub thrown out to the whale. Our philosophical readers may not be displeased to know, on the credit of an ingenious correspondent who had opportunity of informing himself, that Mr. Byrne in August 1780 measured eight feet; that in 1782 he had gained two inches; and after he was dead he measured 8 ft. 4 in. Neither his father, mother, brother nor any other person of the family was of an extraordinary size.

The skeleton of Byrne went to the Royal College of Surgeons, then in the Old Bailey, now in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was sent into the country during the Second World War, 1939–45, and so escaped destruction. Oliver Wendell Holmes, having seen it in 1886, said finely: 'His hand was the only one I took, either in England or Scotland, which had not a warm and a hearty welcome in it.'

MORE ANNALS OF THE POOR

March 17th, 1784 ANNUAL REGISTER

The following affair was discovered in a court by the side of Fleet Market. Some of the lodgers smelt something offensive up two pair of stairs, where a man and his family lodged, and calling to the children to open the door, they replied they could not; on which the people burst it open, when they found the poor woman dead upon the bed, and four children, two boys and two girls, naked and almost starved to death, three of them so weak for want of food that they could not stand. The eldest boy, who could just speak to be understood, said that his mother died the 13th February, and that their father left them soon after. The parish officers were sent for who ordered them to be carried in chairs to the workhouse and great care to be taken of them. The deceased was with difficulty, being in a state of putrefaction, put into a coffin to be carried to the workhouse for interment.

A BARBAROUS BARBER

December 1st, 1784 ANNUAL REGISTER

A most remarkable murder was perpetrated in the following manner by a journeyman barber that lived near Hyde Park Corner, who had been for a long time past jealous of his wife, but could no way bring it home to her. A young gentleman by chance coming into his master's shop to be shaved and dressed, and being in liquor, mentioned his having seen a fine girl home to Hamilton Street, from whom he had certain favours the night before, and at the same time describing her person. The barber concluding it to be his wife, in the height of his frenzy, cut the young gentleman's throat from ear to ear and absconded.

DEATH BY LIGHTNING

July 12th, 1787 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Deaths. — At his house, near the Bishop's Palace, Lambeth, at about a quarter before six in the evening by a flash of lightning, Mr. Bacon, Clerk to the Salt Office. At the beginning of the storm he was drinking tea with his wife, the back windows of the one pair of stairs to the South having been open all day, he went up for the purpose of shutting them; and in the action of lifting up his right arm, received the stroke, which tore his coat eight inches in length, and four in breadth;

from whence it entered his right side, nearly opposite his heart, went through his body, and out at the left hip, and down his left leg to his buckle (which melted) and tore the upper leather of his shoe from the sole. His dog being at that foot, was also struck dead; after which the lightning penetrated the wainscot and floor of the one pair of stairs and made its way into the front parlour North, where it tore the wainscot in a singular manner, and went off with an explosion louder than any piece of ordnance. Another account says, That he owes his death to a gun being laid across the window, placed there to prevent thieves from breaking into the house, which, on this occasion, operated as a conductor for the lightning, for at the instant that he was shutting the window, he received the electrical fire from the barrel of the gun, which he accidentally touched, and was immediately struck dead. The violence of the stroke was such that it tore out his intestines, and made his body a most shocking spectacle. He was first discovered by a little girl in the house, who was so terrified as to be unable to explain the cause of her alarm to Mrs. Bacon who went into the room herself, and in consequence of seeing this dreadful sight, has been at times in fits ever since, and great doubts are entertained whether she will ever recover.

There is a memorial tablet to Mr William Bacon in the porch of Lambeth Parish Church, where he was buried. (See *Encyclopaedia of London*.)

THE LUNATIC, THE LOVER AND THE POET

September 8th, 1787 ANNUAL REGISTER

One Thomas Stone underwent a long examination before several of the faculty and some Justices of the Peace; when evident marks of insanity having appeared in many parts of his late conduct, he was ordered to be confined till farther orders in Bedlam Hospital.

Some days before this Her Majesty received a very extraordinary letter from Stone mentioning a very warm passion which he had conceived for her eldest daughter, and hoping, if their majesties approved of the idea of his marrying her, he and the Princess Royal would be a very happy couple. After this the man appeared at St. James's and begged leave to be introduced in form as, from not having had an answer, he conceived his proposal was acceded to; silence gave consent! This, however, was not much attended to by the people to whom he spoke. On his going afterwards to Kew, he was seized and confined till he could be taken to the Public Office in Bow Street to be examined, where he confessed to have conceived an attachment for her Royal Highness; also that she had conceived the same for him. A great many papers on the subject of love were found upon him, addressed to her Serene Highness the Princess Royal.

Stone is a heavy-looking man, about 33 years of age; he is a native of Shaftesbury and his father is a floor-cloth painter. He was brought up as an attorney, and has an uncle of the name of Sutton

living in Islington. He wrote a letter to Mr. Delaval of Pall Mall, saying he proposed a plan for paying off the national debt.

His conversation is truly that of a lunatic. He says his heart was stole from him three years ago, and till last March he did not know who was the robber, till being at the play he saw the Princess Royal looking up at the two shilling gallery.

The following are the lines which at the time of the above examination were submitted to the critical examination of Dr. Munro, and which Stone acknowledged to be his production.

‘To Her Highness the Princess Royal.

Thrice glad were I to be your living slave,
But not the captive of the tool or knave;
With woe on woe you melt my fighting breast
Whilst you reject your humble would-be guest.’

This gentleman sounds a little like the lunatic lover of Mrs Nickleby. The inference that a man who proposed a scheme for paying off the national debt was insane, would be far stronger now, when truly the figure is astronomical.

HANGED AND BURNED

June 26th, 1788 THE WORLD

Jeremiah Grace and Margaret Sullivan, convicted in May session for feloniously and traitorously colouring with certain materials producing the colour of silver on certain pieces of copper resembling shillings and sixpences, were brought out of Newgate about seven o'clock (with two other criminals), and after spending some time in devotion, the platform dropped at a quarter before eight. They behaved with a seriousness and decency becoming their unhappy situation.

After the men had been hanged about a quarter of an hour, the woman was brought out, dressed in black, attended by a priest of the Roman persuasion. As soon as she came to the stake, she was placed on a stool, which after some time was taken from under her, and after being strangled, the faggots were placed around her, and being set fire to, she was consumed to ashes.

This was the last occasion of hanging being supplemented by burning.

A WRONG DIAGNOSIS

February 12th, 1789 THE TIMES

A very curious circumstance happened to a certain orator when he went to St. Luke's the other day. The person who let him in at the door went out on some particular business, and another took his station. The orator, on his return from collecting maniac precedents, to ornament his speech on the Regency Bill, was stopped by the porter who refused to let him out and desired him to go back to his ward. Astonished at his treatment, the orator told him who he was, at which the other laughed. On this, and not being of the most placid temper in the world, he flew into a passion, and threatened the porter with the House of Commons. The porter, imagining the fit was returning called to an assistant, and a straight jacket was instantly brought and put on; and in that situation he remained from two until four in the afternoon, when the visiting doctor came who pronounced him very bad indeed. But how much was he astonished when, on making his report, it was discovered that no such person as he described was on the book. The matter was immediately enquired into and, the porter being returned who let the orator in, and having explained the circumstance, every apology was made, and the irritated gentleman released from his disagreeable situation.

St Luke's Hospital still stands in Old Street, near City Road. It was erected 1782-84, and used for its original purpose well into the present century. For many years the building was used by the printers to the Bank of England. At present it is occupied by a bag-maker. There is a picture of the interior in *The Microcosm of London* by Rowlandson and Pugin (1808).

A FLOOD

February 9th, 1791 ANNUAL REGISTER

The Thames rose this afternoon to an amazing height. The water was considerably higher than it has been for the last twenty years past. New Palace Yard and Westminster Hall were overflowed, and the lawyers were actually conveyed to and from the courts in boats. The water rose through the sewers and overflowed the privy gardens, great part of Scotland Yard, and some parts of St. James's Park. The cellars and kitchens in that neighbourhood were nearly all filled with water. The damage done in the warehouses on the wharfs on both sides the river is immense; they were overflowed almost without exception, as was also the Custom House Quay, Tower Wharf, Bankside, Queenhithe, great part of Tooley Street, Wapping High Street, Thames Street, etc., and all the adjoining cellars filled; most of the gardens and fields between Blackfriars Road and Westminster Bridge were overflowed. The water was so deep in several streets that boats were used to remove the inhabitants. In New Palace Yard the scuttle for boats was so violent that several gentlemen of the long robe were thrown into the water; and Westminster Hall not being in the list of regulated fares, the fees insisted on by the watermen were universally complained of as exorbitant.

A PASSION FOR PUSSIES

January 1792 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Deaths. — In Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, Mrs. Gregg, a single lady between fifty and sixty years of age, remarkable for her benevolence to cats, no fewer than eighty being entertained under her hospitable roof at the time of her decease, at an allowance of near a guinea per week. She was in affluent circumstances, and on the death of a sister a short time ago, receiving an addition to her income, she set up her coach and went out almost every day, airing, but suffered no male servant to sleep in her house. The maids being frequently tired of their attendance on such a numerous household, she was reduced at last to take a black woman to attend upon and feed them.

According to John Adams (Second Volume of *Curious Anecdotes*, 1792), Mrs Griggs left the sum of £30,000. Her executors found in her house 86 living and 28 dead cats. Her mode of interment was to place them in different boxes, which were heaped one on another in closets. She had a family servant. To her she left £150 per annum to keep the favourites whom she left behind.

A THEATRE TRAGEDY

February 3rd, 1794 ANNUAL REGISTER

This evening a melancholy accident happened at the Haymarket Theatre, at which their majesties had commanded 'My Grandmother', 'No Song No Supper', and 'The Prize'. It was occasioned in the following manner: in the crowd one of the deceased was thrown down; the people kept pushing forward; others were thrown down over him, and all were trampled on by the crowd who pressed over their bodies into the house. The pit lies lower than the threshold of the door leading into it; those therefore who go in must go down steps. Here it was that the mischief happened; for the people who were unfortunate sufferers, either not knowing anything of the steps or being hurried on by the pressure of the crowd behind, fell down; while those who followed immediately were, by the same irresistible impulse, hurried over them. The scene that ensued may be easier conceived than described; the shouts and screams of the dying and the maimed were truly shocking; while those who were literally trampling their fellow creatures to death, had it not in their power to avoid the mischief they were doing. Seven bodies completely lifeless were carried into Mr. Wynch's, the druggist, next door to the theatre, some to the shops of other gentlemen, and the remainder to St. Martin's Bone House to be owned. Medical aid was called in, and everything done to restore animation, if it was only suspended; but we are sorry that success attended the process in one case only.

Fifteen were killed, including one buried in the church of St Benet, Paul's Wharf (Queen Victoria Street) where there is a tablet commemorating John Charles Brook:

'Somerset Herald, Secretary to the Earl Marshal of England and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.'

The inscription continues:

'He lived in a strict intimacy with Persons of the highest Rank, and of the first literary character without the smallest tincture of vanity.'

It concludes:

'Let us, instead of envying the possession, reflect on the awful uncertainty of these sublunary blessings for Alas he was in a moment bereaved of them in the dreadful calamity which happened at the Theatre in the Hay-market on the Third of February 1794 in the forty-sixth year of his age.'

RESURRECTIONISTS

March 24th, 1794 ANNUAL REGISTER

This evening a set of resurrectionists were apprehended at a house near the turnpike, Mile End. That morning a coach was observed to stop at the house, and an ill-looking fellow came out of it with a sack containing, as was supposed, a body which he carried into the house and returned immediately with a large hamper – they then drove off to a neighbouring public house when, after a short stay, they took up some others, and were traced to the launch at Deptford. In the meantime the parish officers were informed of the circumstances and at six in the evening the coach returned with a similar lading which was deposited in the house. Some constables, accompanied by a number of people, surrounded the house, and forcing an entrance, they found two men and a woman drinking tea on a bench; at one end of which lay the bodies of two children. They were secured, and one entering an adjoining room the bodies of six adults were discovered unmutilated, besides which the floor was strewed with limbs too shocking for public description.

WANTED — A MATCH

July 19th, 1794 MORNING CHRONICLE

A reputable tradesman in the neighbourhood of Bond Street, about thirty-five years of age, in a genteel and profitable business which clears at present about 200 pounds per annum, but may be greatly extended and improved, would be happy to meet with a lady, nearly of his own age, of an active disposition and good temper. The advertiser from his uniform application to business has not had an opportunity of being much in the company of the fair sex, which induces him to take this method of addressing his sentiments, and he flatters himself that any lady seriously inclined to form a union in the matrimonial state, will on applying by letter appointing an interview to B. B., No. 28 Field Street, Battle Bridge, find that she has to deal with a man of honour and integrity and have in the sequel reason to confess that, in so doing, she has consulted her own interest as well as that of the advertiser.

N.B. It is hoped none will apply through idle curiosity, and as the advertiser's situation and circumstances in life are easy, it is expected that the lady can command a few hundred pounds.

A CORPSE NO CREDITOR

September 1st, 1794 ANNUAL REGISTER

As the corpse of a gentleman was proceeding to the burial ground it was arrested by a sheriff's officer and his followers under the usual warrant of a writ of *capias ad satisfaciendum*. The friends who followed immediately left their coaches and told the officer if he chose he was welcome to take the body but he should not have coffin, shroud, or any particle in which the body was enveloped, as those things were the property of the executors, and farther insisted that as the deceased had by his will bequeathed his body to them no execution would hold good against the corpse. The Bailiff, after attending to many literary and persuasive arguments, and having discussed the matter as fully as the time and place would admit of, was very properly convinced that the spirit of the law meant a living and not a dead body and accordingly marched off without insisting farther on the legality of his capture.

A BULLOCK DRAINED

October 1795 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

An extraordinary circumstance occurred in Bridge Street, Blackfriars. A bullock worried by the dogs ran into the aperture made in the arch which covers the large drain from Fleet Market to the Thames under Bridge Street. The animal dropped into the drain and was carried by the current of water to the Thames where it was laid hold of. The bullock lost one of its eyes in falling, but came out alive.

A HOUSING COLLAPSE

June 7th, 1796 ANNUAL REGISTER

The following melancholy accident happened yesterday morning in Houghton Street, Clare Market. Two houses suddenly gave way and buried in the ruins 15 unfortunate inhabitants. At noon 13 were got out and conveyed to the parish workhouse in Portugal Street. Of these three had been dug out, shockingly mangled, without the least symptoms of life: two children, apparently dead, were restored to life by means prescribed by the Humane Society in cases of suffocation; the rest received some of them slight and others severe contusions. The landlord of one of the houses, it is reported, received notice of the insecurity of his house two days ago, but did not apprize the lodgers of their danger for fear of losing them.

INQUEST ON CHARLES LAMB'S MOTHER

September 24th, 1796 THE TIMES

On Friday afternoon the Coroner and a Jury sat on the body of a lady, in the neighbourhood of Holborn, who died in consequence of a wound from her daughter the preceding day.

It appeared by the evidence adduced, that while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case knife laying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and with loud shrieks approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with a fatal knife, and the old man her father weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room.

A few days prior to this, the family had observed some symptoms of insanity in her, which had so much increased on the Wednesday evening, that her brother, early the next morning, went to Dr. Pitcairn, but that gentleman was not at home.

It seems the young lady had been once before deranged. The jury of course brought in their verdict Lunacy.

AN UNDEVOUT END

June 6th, 1797 THE TIMES

Yesterday morning at half past seven o'clock Martin Clinch and James Macklay were executed in the Old Bailey, pursuant to their sentence for the murder of Mr. Fryer on the 7th May last. After the executioner had fixed the ropes round their necks the platform accidentally gave way and precipitated the two clergymen (one of whom was a Roman Catholic), together with the executioners, to the ground, and the unhappy sufferers into eternity before the caps were drawn over their faces or having received the usual consolation from prayers being read to them.

BURIAL OF A MUTINEER

July 4th, 1797 ANNUAL REGISTER

The body of Parker, the mutineer, which was taken out of the new naval burying ground at Sheerness was brought to the Hoop and Horse Shoe P.H., Queen Street, Little Tower Hill, on Saturday evening. So large a concourse of persons assembled before the house next day that a party of constables were stationed there in order to keep the mob from breaking into the house, and the corpse in the afternoon was removed to the workhouse in Nightingale Lane by order of the parish. Afterwards Mrs. Parker was taken before the sitting magistrates in Lambert Street and examined touching the object of her taking up the body. Her answer was: 'For the purpose of a more decent interment.' It was buried this morning early in the vault of Whitechapel Church.

Parker was the leader of the Naval mutiny at the Nore.

A QUACK OF QUACKS

July 15th, 1797 MORNING CHRONICLE

Martin Van Butchell from his Anatomical, Botanical, Chemical, Experimental, Mechanical, Medical, Philosophical, Practical and Surgical knowledge, is depended on as the truest friend to sober people sorely afflicted with said sad complaints. Advice New Guinea. Fee is given first. Do no' ken bad notes, or evil dollars, fa' we no take 'em. Come from ten till one (seven days a week) for he goes to none. Mount Street in London (almost 30 years) number 56: very near Hyde Park. . . . Healer of Mankind: Briton born and bred: aged sixty-two: observe what is said he's a Christian strong: (an entire man) having comely Beard: full ten inches long: eight legitimates. Another coming.

For further particulars of Van Butchell, see *The Quacks of Old London*, by C. J. S. Thomson (1928). (See also under October 21st, 1775.)

A CONTEST FOR A CORPSE

November 10th, 1797 EVENING MAIL

At the execution of John Bryant, for a rape, before Newgate on Wednesday, an extraordinary occurrence took place. Between nine and ten o'clock a hackney coach drew up at the Prison door, in order to convey away the body of Bryant, which being brought out a violent altercation took place between two parties among the crowd, each headed by a woman, as to which was best entitled to the possession of the corpse. Upon the body being brought into the street, the two contending parties seized hold of it, some dragged it by the legs, and others by the head and arms, and contributed to prevent its fall to the ground. After an obstinate contest for nearly half an hour the deceased was carried into Giltspur Street, where, being put into a coach, it was driven off. The populace then dispersed.

SLEEPING WATCHMEN

December 16th, 1797 MORNING CHRONICLE

Early on Thursday morning the shop of Mr. Farthing, pocket book maker, the corner of St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, was robbed (by cutting a hole in one of the shop window shutters) of property to a considerable amount. What is remarkable in this daring robbery, the shop is part of the premises of the Watch-House under the same roof only divided by a thin partition – the least noise made in the shop must be heard distinctly in the Watch-House. The Watch consist of twelve watchmen besides constables: the whole of these trusty guardians of the night must have been asleep, or they must have sat in their chairs by the fire side and heard the thieves take the property out of the shop window.

Watch. We will rather sleep than talk: we know what belongs to a watch.

Dog. Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman, for I cannot see how sleeping should offend. (*Much Ado About Nothing.*)

Henry Fielding said in *Amelia* (1751) that the Watch were: 'Chosen out of those poor old decrepit people who are from their want of bodily strength rendered incapable of getting a livelihood by work. These men, armed only with a pole, which some of them are scarce able to lift, are to secure the persons and house of His Majesty's subjects from the attacks of gangs of young, bold, stout, desperate, and well-armed villains. If the poor old fellows should run away from such enemies, no one I think can wonder unless it be that they were able to make their escape.'

(See under October 30th, 1802.)

A MISER'S DEATH

April 26th, 1798 ANNUAL REGISTER

Died. – Aged 84, at his house in neighbourhood of Kentish Town, where he had resided more than forty years, John Little Esquire, bachelor. The narrative of his life exemplifies the little utility of money, when in possession of such a man. A few days prior to his demise, the physician who attended observed how highly necessary it was that he should occasionally drink a glass of wine. After much persuasion, he was induced to comply; yet by no means entrust even his house-keeper with the key of the cellar; but insisted upon being carried down to the door which, on being opened, he in person delivered out one bottle of wine, when, it is supposed, being removed from a warm bed into a dark humid vault, he was seized with a shivering fit which terminated in an apopleptic stroke and occasioned his death. So great was his antipathy to the married state, that he discarded his brother, the only relative he had, for not continuing like himself in a state of celibacy. On his effects being examined, it appeared that he had £25,000 in the different tontines, £11,000 in four per cents, and £2,000 in landed property; 173 pairs of breeches, and a numerous collection of other articles of wearing apparel were found in a room which had not been opened for 14 years; 180 wigs were found in the coach-house, which had been bequeathed to him, with other things by different relations whom he survived and to which the offending brother becomes entitled.

The word 'tontine' has gone into disuse. The following extract from the *Annual Register* for 1765 explains it:

'The House of Commons came to a resolution of raising £300,000 by way of tontines or annuities upon lives at 3 per cent with benefit of survivorship.'

DON SALTERO'S COFFEE HOUSE

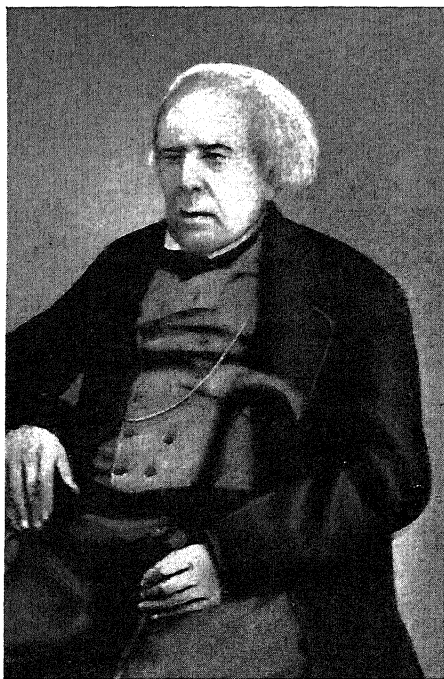
January 8th, 1799 ANNUAL REGISTER

The lease of Don Saltero's Coffee House at Chelsea was sold with all the curiosities. This well-known coffee house was first opened in the year 1695 by one Salter, a barber, who drew the attention of the public by the eccentricities of his conduct, and by furnishing his house with a large collection of natural and other curiosities, which till now remained in the coffee room where printed catalogues were sold with the names of the principal benefactors to the collection. Sir Hans Sloane contributed largely out of the superfluities of his own museum. Vice-Admiral Munden and other officers who had been much upon the coasts of Spain, enriched it with many curiosities, and gave the owner the name of Don Saltero; see *Tatler* No. 34 . . . where Salter is ridiculed for his credulity in appropriating his pin cushions and hats to Queen Elizabeth's chambermaids, etc. In the same light is to be considered the famous relic we have seen in the museum of the Royal Society at Crane Court, under the name of Pontius Pilate's wife's grandmother's hat, but better fitted to fit Mother Shipton or her grandame. Such collections, however, aided by those of Tradescant, Ashmole, and Thoresby, cherished the infancy of science, and should be appreciated as the playthings of a boy after he has arrived at manhood.

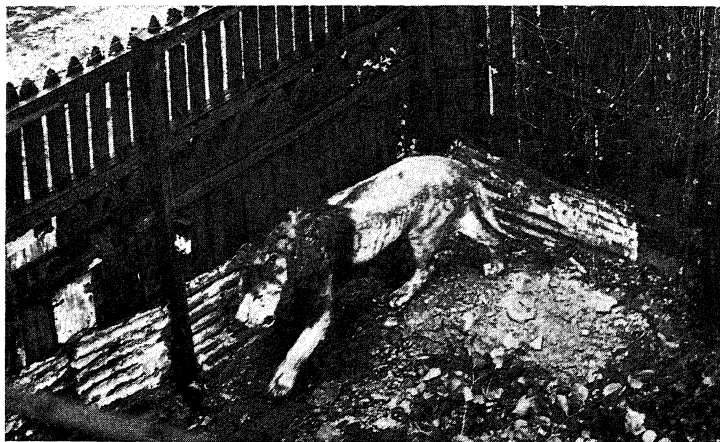
The coffee-house (in Cheyne Walk) was rebuilt in 1867 as a private residence. The house still bears the name of Don Saltero. (See *Encyclopaedia of London*.)



Dr van Butchell



Robert Burns Junior



A WELL DISCOVERED

March 16th, 1799 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

By the sinking of the pavement nearly opposite the front gate of the Royal Exchange a very large deep well of great antiquity has been discovered. The water is of excellent quality, and the ward of Cornhill purpose erecting a pump near the spot. Upon examining Stow's History of London, it appears to have been covered over for more than 600 years for he notices as standing there a conduit and a watch-house, together with a place of confinement for disordered persons, at the top of which was placed the pillory for their punishment; all which he says were removed in 1380. What is remarkable, the top of the well was not secured by either arch or brickwork, but only covered with planks.

The pump was erected, on Cornhill, on April 9th, 1799, and is still in position but, of course, unused.

WHERE KING JOHN SLEPT

January 25th, 1800 ANNUAL REGISTER

The storm last night blew down the remains of King John's Castle at Old Ford, near Bow. This ancient pile was built in 1203, and was the residence of King John. Here, historians say, he plotted the death of Prince Arthur; here he entertained the Brabancon chiefs, and here he usually slept, after having signed Magna Charta. This place was first mutilated during the civil wars of Charles I; about forty years ago the chapel fell, and ten years afterwards two wings tumbled down. It is now all levelled. The ground belongs to the Bluecoat School. Some curious coins have been discovered in the ruins.

The above is an amusing paragraph. It sounds as if signing Magna Carta was a common pursuit of the King. It was sealed, not signed.

ACCIDENT AT THE GOLDEN CROSS INN

April 11th, 1800 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

This afternoon, as the Chatham and Rochester Coach came out of the gateway of the inn yard of the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, a young woman sitting on top threw her head back, to prevent it striking against the beam, but there being so great a luggage on the roof of the coach as to hinder her laying herself sufficiently back, it caught her face and tore her forehead in a dreadful manner. She was conveyed to an hospital where she died on the 19th. The Coroner's Inquest was on the 22nd held at Westminster Infirmary on the body of the above young woman, who it appears was only 19 years of age, and brought in a verdict of 'Accidental Death', but on account of apparent neglect in the coachman, they fined him £5. It appeared that the deceased had come down to town to visit a lying-in sister, and was on her return to Chatham when the accident happened.

This incident is reminiscent of the story related by Jingle in Chapter 9 of *Pickwick Papers*.

ANIMUS AGAINST ANATOMY

April 26th, 1801 ANNUAL REGISTER

About 8 in the evening a mob assembled before a house in Wych Street, formerly the Queen of Bohemia Tavern (but now supposed to be unoccupied), in consequence of some boys who had been at play in the passage declaring they saw some persons through the keyhole employed in cutting up human bodies. The mob having increased, at length broke into the house in which they found several human bodies partly dissected, one body of a man who appeared to have been not long dead, with that of an infant not four months old, untouched, and several tubs with human flesh, etc. The stench was so great that many were glad to return without viewing the disgusting scene, and many who went in were seized with sickness. Notwithstanding it was explained to the mob that the house had been for some time used as an anatomical theatre, they were so enraged as to proceed to destroy the house; but a party of Bow Street officers arriving, at length succeeded in restoring the peace to the great satisfaction of the neighbourhood who had been much alarmed at an idea that the mob would in their rage set fire to the house. The surgeons who were in the house made their escape by a back way, leaving several of their instruments behind them.

TOO STRONG FOR THE POLICE!

October 30th, 1802 MORNING HERALD

It is said that a man who presented himself for the office of watchman to a parish at the West End of the Town very much infected by depredators, was lately turned away from the Vestry with this reprimand: I am astonished at the impudence of such a great sturdy strong fellow as you are, being so idle as to apply for a watchman's situation, when you are capable of labour.

GRAVE-DIGGER'S DEATH

October 31st, 1804 ANNUAL REGISTER

A distressing event happened at Newington in Surrey. John Ricketts, the sexton, was employed digging a grave for the remains of a lady in Kent Road and the coffin was just entering the church yard, preceded by the minister, when the whole mass of earth on each side of the grave fell in and covered the unfortunate delver in a depth of six feet, just as he was getting out with his pick-axe and shovel. Within five minutes after the accident happened a number of persons ran to assist the poor man, and began to remove the earth; their endeavours were however much retarded by the concourse of spectators who rushed to the brink of the grave, and nearly an hour elapsed before they recovered the body which, being taken out, means were used by a professional gentleman to restore animation; but every effort proved ineffectual, and the body was borne away lifeless on a shutter amidst the cries and complaints of a disconsolate wife and five children who were witnesses of the affecting scene.

PROFITEERING AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

January 1st, 1806 ANNUAL REGISTER

The four vergers of St. Paul's Cathedral who have the exclusive property of the body of the Church are said to make more than a thousand pounds by the daily admission to see the preparations for the funeral [of Lord Nelson]; the door money is taken as at a puppet show, and amounted for seven days to more than £40 each day.

BEAR-BAITING

May 27th, 1806 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

This day, at a bear-baiting in Tothill Fields, one of the bears having broken loose, fastened upon a person of the name of Shawe, whom he tore very much with his paws and would have destroyed him but for the assistance of the people.

HORNE TOOKE ORDERS HIS TOMB

October 4th, 1810 ANNUAL REGISTER

The vault which Mr. Horne Tooke has caused to be prepared for his remains, is situated under a plot of grass in his garden, near the north wall, on Wimbledon Common; it is now ready for his reception. A handsome tombstone, of finely polished black marble, about eight feet long and two wide, with the following engraven epitaph was a few days ago by his own direction laid down.

John Horne Tooke,
late proprietor, and now
occupier of this spot,
was born in June, 1736
and died in
Aged . . . years,
contented and grateful.

The vault was to have been covered by a large block of black Irish marble which Chantrey had procured. Horne Tooke died at Wimbledon on March 18th, 1812, and left a desire to be buried under the tomb over which Sir Francis Burdett was to pronounce a classical oration. It was decided, however, that the tomb would deteriorate the value of his estate, and he was therefore buried at Ealing with the usual ceremony. In error it is stated on one of the pillars outside Bunhill Fields Burial Ground that Horne Tooke was interred there.

Strangely enough, Herbert Spencer had his box tomb in Highgate Cemetery prepared during his lifetime, though, unlike Horne Tooke, it was to contain only ashes. It was recorded in the *New Statesman* in 1952 that an old man, still on the staff of the cemetery, could remember, as a boy, seeing Spencer come to see the tomb in course of construction.

JUDGE JEFFERIES' COFFIN

December 31st, 1810 ANNUAL REGISTER

The workmen employed to repair the Church of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, discovered a short time since the remains of the notorious Chancellor Jefferies. A large flat stone was removed near the Communion Table, and in a vault underneath the men found a leaden coffin containing the body. The coffin did not appear to have suffered much decay. It was closed, and a plate remained on it, inscribed with the name of Chancellor Jefferies. His son and daughter are also buried in the same vault. . . . The coffin was not opened; and after public curiosity had been gratified, it was replaced in the vault, and the stone fastened over it.

CHIMNEY BOY'S DEATH

January 16th, 1811 ANNUAL REGISTER

A poor chimney sweeper's boy lost his life in a most shocking manner in a chimney at a house in Orchard Street, Westminster. He went up a chimney to clean it, and got out at the top. On his return he got into a chimney belonging to the same house by mistake which had a fire at the bottom in which he got stuck fast, and was suffocated before relief could be rendered him.

STOLEN SWANS

February 15th, 1811 ANNUAL REGISTER

A short time since, two of the old swans, and four of those of the last year, whose feathers were about turning white, were stolen from the Serpentine River, in Hyde Park. The bodies were found tied to a tree, without the skins and feathers, which have been traced to a Jew, who resides in Oxford Street, through his sending them to a feather-dresser to be dressed. The Jew has been taken into custody, and has undergone several examinations at the Public Office, Bow Street. The skins and feathers have been identified by a man employed in the Park. Yesterday the Jew underwent a final examination, and was ordered to find bail for having stolen property in his possession.

A POISON PLOT

March 20th, 1811 ANNUAL REGISTER

A most horrid attempt was made by a man who resides near Dockland, on Friday last, to poison his wife and three children. He took a leg of mutton home, and ordered it to be roasted for dinner. His wife accordingly roasted it, and got it ready by the time he appointed. He did not come home to dinner, and the wife and children made their dinner from some provisions that were in the house, and did not cut the leg of mutton. The husband did not arrive till supper

time, and made an excuse for not coming to dinner. His wife offered him some of the leg of mutton for his supper, but he declined it, saying he had brought home some fish which he wished to have fried. His wife fried them with the dripping provided from the roasting of the leg of mutton, and he ate heartily of the fish. In the night he was taken extremely ill, and has continued in most excruciating torture since. He inquired how the fish had been cooked, and being informed and also that none of his family had partaken of the mutton, he acknowledged his guilt by saying the deadly and diabolical scheme he had laid of poisoning the whole of them had fallen upon himself, having laid the leg of mutton in a quantity of arsenic for a considerable time, and also having rubbed it into the meat. The miserable wretch is languishing in the greatest torture of body and mind.

A BABOON BOLTS

April 26th, 1811 ANNUAL REGISTER

A huge baboon, the size of a full grown Newfoundland dog, having broken his den at Exeter Change, got out of the two story window, and fell on the leads of some shops adjoining, whence he leaped into the street and proceeded up Burleigh Street, with a numerous concourse of people after him. He was afterwards safely secured without doing any mischief.

Exeter Change was a small menagerie which stood on a site in the Strand now covered by the Strand Palace Hotel. It was demolished in 1829.

ANOTHER HOUSING COLLAPSE

May 22nd, 1811 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

This morning, about half past two o'clock, the house belonging to Mr. Hastings, the sign of King Henry VIII, corner of White Lion Street and Great St. Andrews Streets, Seven Dials, fell down. The screams and cries of the inhabitants were dreadful as most of them were buried under the ruins. In a short time 500 persons surrounded the spot, many of whom set about digging the unfortunate persons from their perilous situation. An old man, with an infant in his arms, dead, was the first shocking spectacle that presented itself. The most horrid groans were heard in the ruins, but in consequence of some timber stopping up the way, the bodies could not be got at for some time after. A young man unfortunately received the spade on his skull; he with four others in a dreadfully mangled state, were taken to Hospital. An old woman named Toogood who lodged in the second floor, being apprised of her danger, threw herself out of the window, by which she was so much hurt as to leave little hope of recovery.

UNCLOTHED AT CARLTON HOUSE

June 29th, 1811 MORNING CHRONICLE

The number of stray shoes in the court yard of Carlton House, on Wednesday, was so great they filled a large tub, from which the shoeless ladies were invited to select their lost property. Many ladies, however, and also gentlemen, might be seen walking away in their stockinged feet. About a dozen females were so completely disrobed in the squeeze, they were obliged to send home for clothes, before they could venture out in the streets, and one lady was so completely disencumbered of all dress, a female domestic, in kind compassion, wrapped her up in an apron.

A CAPTURED CORPSE

October 16th, 1811 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

As a funeral procession was preparing to proceed from Hoxton to Shoreditch Burial Ground the ceremony was prevented by a sheriff's officer and his assistants who, having prepared a writ, removed the body into a shell, and conveyed it away. The authors of this disgraceful proceeding applied the following day to the minister of Shoreditch to inter the corpse which he very properly refused, unless the service were read over it which would insure the security of the body in holy ground. The sheriffs have caused inquiry to be instituted into the circumstances of the case; and finding that, though the officer did not disturb the body himself, he improperly left it with the Plaintiff without having made any communication at the Sheriff's office; they have dismissed him from his employment.

A HURRICANE

October 27th, 1812 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

One of the Hampstead stages was overset by a gust of wind, and a gentleman riding on the outside had his leg broken. Seven persons were killed in the metropolis by tiles falling etc. A Lamp lighter named Burke, while lighting the lamps on the east side of Blackfriars Bridge, was by a sudden gust thrown into the river in the presence of his son, a child of ten years old, and sunk before assistance could be procured.

FOG

January 1st, 1814 SUN

The fog still continues. It was more dense and oppressive last night than at any time since its commencement on Monday last. Very few persons ventured out except on pressing business; and no sound was heard out of doors but the voices of the watchman or the noise of some solitary carriage cautiously feeling its way through the gloom. It extends as far as the Downs, a distance of 70 miles, but how far in other directions has not been ascertained. The wind has in the interval blown uniformly from the north-east. We understand that there has been nothing like the present fog since the great earthquake at Lisbon about half a century ago. The fog then lasted about eight days.

On Thursday night last, about nine o'clock, a serjeant belonging to the West Kent Militia, garrisoned in the Tower, owing to the thickness of fog, fell into the river from the wharf, and was unfortunately drowned before assistance, from the extreme darkness, could be of any avail.

Monday night, owing to the thick fog, a post-chaise and four passengers, on its way to Uckfield, was overturned into the water by the roadside at Brixton Wash; the chaise was broken to pieces and the passengers and horses dreadfully cut and bruised.

THAMES FROZEN OVER

February 1st, 1814 THE TIMES

During the whole of the afternoon of yesterday hundreds of people were assembled on Blackfriars and London Bridges to see several very adventurous men cross and recross the Thames on the ice. The late thaw has sent such a quantity of ice down the river as completely to choke up the Thames between those two bridges, and the frost on Sunday night and yesterday has so united the vast mass as to render it immovable by the tide. At one time seventy persons were counted crossing from Queenhithe to the opposite shore.

February 2nd, 1814 THE TIMES

The Thames yesterday, between Blackfriars and London Bridges, continued to present the novel scene of persons moving on the ice in all directions, and in greatly increased numbers. The ice, however, from its roughness and inequalities, is totally unfit for amusements, though we observed several booths erected upon it for the sale of small wares. . . . The whole of the river opposite Queenhithe was completely frozen over; and in some parts the ice was several feet thick, while in others it was dangerous to venture upon; notwithstanding which crowds of foot passengers crossed backward and forward. Through the whole of the day we did not hear of many lives being lost; but many who ventured too far towards Blackfriars Bridge were partially immersed in the water by the ice giving way. Two coopers were with difficulty saved.

Midway between the two bridges and nearly opposite Queenhithe above 30 booths were erected for the sale of porter, spirits, ginger bread, etc. Skittles were played by several parties, and the drinking tents filled by females and their companions dancing reels, while others sat round large fires, drinking rum, grog and other spirits. Several tradesmen also attended, selling books, toys, etc. of every description. Several printers brought their presses, pulled off various impressions which they sold for a trifle. Among the paths for the conveyance of perambulation, the principal was dignified with the appellation of the City Road. The booths extended down to London Bridge under the centre arches of which numerous spectators were to be seen. The watermen and coalheavers did not fail to benefit by this curiosity, as the progress of the visitors was much facilitated by their simple inventions at the different stairs and elsewhere, and they were at much trouble to beat footways in different directions. On Thursday, February 3, a sheep was roasted, or rather burnt, over a charcoal fire, in a large iron pan. The admission to the booth where this culinary skill was displayed, was 6d. per head. On Thursday a plumber named Daws, attempting to cross near Blackfriars Bridge, with some lead in his hand, sunk between two masses of ice, and rose no more.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT

August 30th, 1814 THE TIMES

Joanna Southcott. The man who officiates as chief preacher of the doctrines of Joanna Southcott, in her chapel at St. George's Fields, is one Tozer. The strange pretensions of Joanna have excited so much curiosity among the populace, that a crowd assembled on Sunday morning at the chapel doors, not half of which could find room within. Those without were not without entertainment, as some itinerant cobbler mounted a temporary rostrum, and amused them with a violent oration against Joanna and Parson Tozer. When what Tozer called divine service was over, the mob insisted on seeing him, which brought him to the window, whence he addressed to them an oration in his turn. . . . He told them that great things were about to happen on the earth, and that he was coming who should prepare the millenium, when swords should be turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks, and a poor man get bread without the sweat of his brow. Tozer, in answer to the anxious enquiries of the crowd, as to the time of the promised event concerning Joanna, said it would take place about the middle of October; till then he should not re-open his chapel. If the event did not appear as predicted, he would appear at the chapel on Christmas Day, and then admit that he and all the other believers had been deceived.

Tozer did not appear on Christmas Day. What prophet is prepared to advertise the failure of his predictions? By December the prophetess was no nearer giving birth to

'Shiloh', and *The Times* reported that at Crewkerne two of her deluded followers had been discovered in the design of sending to town one of two twins which was to be announced as the promised child. In the same paper, on December 28th, 1814, Ann Underwood reported that Joanna had died 'to all appearance' (at 31 Manchester Street, Manchester Square). In accordance with her directions, however, the body was being kept warm and it was believed by many that the vital functions were only suspended for a few days. On January 2nd, 1815, however, she was buried in the graveyard of St John's Wood Chapel, where there is a stone over her grave and another a short distance away. (See *English Messiahs* by Ronald Matthews (1936).)

A PONY'S PERFORMANCE

November 17th, 1814 THE TIMES

A Most Extraordinary Performance

A pony, the property of Mr. Marshall, fish-monger, Fish Street Hill, on Saturday last, was led by his lad to the gallery, the top of the Monument, and several times round the same, and down again, without a slip or stumble. On Monday following, the same pony was led by the same lad to the iron gallery, the top of St. Paul's Church, several times round the same, and down again, without slip or stumble.

In the pre-fire cathedral a similar incident occurred. In 1600 a horse called Morocco, owned by Bankes, a Cheapside vintner, climbed to the top of St Paul's to the delight, as Dekker put it, of 'a number of asses who stood braying below'. The horse was also dexterous on 'the light fantastic toe' and allusion is made to this in *Love's Labour's Lost*—'How easy it is to put years to the word 'three, and study three years in two words, the dancing horse will tell you'. (See the present writer's *London for Shakespeare Lovers* (1934).)

A DEADLY DISCOVERY

December 5th, 1814 THE TIMES

On Saturday a Coroner's Inquest sat at the chambers of I. J. Williams Esq., Gray's Inn Square, on the body of John Hinckley, found the preceding afternoon dead in his bed. Many enquiries having been made for the deceased, and nobody having seen him for near three months, the ticket porters got into the chambers by the window, the outer and inner doors being locked. They drew aside the bed curtains, and discovered the deceased completely decayed. He was about 50 years of age, and the last time anyone remembered to have seen him alive, was about the middle of September. Verdict—Died by the visitation of God.

According to Belsham's chronology of the reign of George III, the body was almost eaten up by flies.

DEODAND

December 8th, 1814 ANNUAL REGISTER

An inquest was held at the Crown, Westminster Bridge, on the body of John Stevenson, late a saddler of Westminster Road, who was killed on Tuesday by Zephyr, the stag, at Astley's Theatre. Mr. Parker, one of the proprietors of the theatre, stated that he had care of the stag which belongs to a foreigner named Garnier, now in France. Garnier had been applied to several times to take the animal away, but neglected to do so: it was kept in a stall near the stables. On Tuesday last witness was preparing to feed it with turnips, when he saw the deceased, who had been employed last summer to make a collar or halter for the stag. Finding it was tight, the animal having grown fat, he called to Stevenson and asked if it could not be altered. Deceased said it could. After a few minutes conversation, they went towards the stall, and on the approach of Mr. Stevenson the stag made a dart at him, fixed him with his horns against the wall, and gored him. The witness, having a stick, beat the stag, and forced him to quit the deceased. Stevenson then appeared with his body bent to the ground, a profusion of blood issued from the wound, and in a short time after the accident he expired. . . . Verdict *Accidental Death*. The stag is forfeited to the Archbishop of Canterbury as a *deodand*. Ten pounds are to be given as an equivalent.

Astley's Theatre was finally demolished in 1896. It is finely described, as it was a little later than the above incident, in Chapter XXXIX of Dicken's *Old Curiosity Shop* (1839). On

No. 225 Westminster Bridge Road is a tablet erected by the Circus Fans' Association in 1951.

'Deodand. A thing to be given or forfeited to God. English law. A thing which because it had been the immediate cause of the death of a person was given to God, that is forfeited to the Crown, to be applied to pious uses, as to be distributed in alms. Thus, if a cart ran over a man and killed him, it was forfeited as a deodand. Deodands are unknown in American law, but were not abolished in England till 1846.' -

Webster's *International Dictionary*.

NAVIGATION BY GEESE

July 2nd, 1815 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Usher, the clown of the Coburg Theatre, in consequence of a wager, set off in a machine like a washing tub, drawn by four geese, at half past twelve o'clock, from below Southwark Bridge, and passed under four bridges and arrived at half-past two at Cumberland Gardens. A pole extended from the machine in which he sat to which the geese were harnessed. For some time they were quite tractable, and he went on swimmingly, but at times they were quite restless and not easily managed. A great number of persons accompanied him in boats, and several viewed the whimsical expedition from the bridges. After completing it, he offered for a wager of a hundred guineas to return from thence through the centre arch of London Bridge, but no person would accept the challenge.

ANOTHER GRAVE DISASTER

July 31st, 1816 ANNUAL REGISTER

About one o'clock in the afternoon the remains of Miss Burrowes of Red Lion Street, Clerkenwell, were taken to St. James's Church, Clerkenwell Green, for interment. The grave was ordered to be dug twenty feet deep: when the body came to be lowered, the undertaker found some fault with the depth, and the grave-digger and his assistant went down to throw up a few more shovels of earth, when unfortunately, owing to the great pressure of the people and the ground being composed of loose earth, the sides gave way, and the earth fell in and buried them under its weight; several men were immediately set about shovelling away the earth, which kept constantly falling in; but in about an hour after, the body of one of them, of the name of Butcher, apparently dead, was found, immediately carried home, and by the means prescribed for restoring persons apparently suffocated, he was restored to life; he is now out of danger, but very ill from the bruises he received. The body of Ruby, the other workman, was not discovered until near ten o'clock at night; it now lies in the vaults under the church for the inspection of the Coroner's inquest which will be held at the Crown Tavern this day. Ruby was in very indigent circumstances, and has left a wife in a pregnant state, and three young children to deplore his loss. A subscription is opened for the relief of the widow and orphans. The body of Miss Burrowes was deposited in a vault under the church.

NO GREAT EXPECTATIONS AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

August 5th, 1820 ANNUAL REGISTER

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster are, it is said, disappointed in their expectations of emolument from Westminster Abbey on the ensuing Coronation. Their claim to the profits arising from the letting of seats and other accommodation to strangers in that place is disallowed nearly *in toto* and it is ascertained that they have a right to nothing more than the chancel, necessary to the performance of their religious functions. Colonel Stevenson, on the part of the Board of Works, has taken possession of the Abbey, of which he now holds the keys. The portion now allowed to the Dean and Chapter does not exceed one tenth of the whole. They expected originally to derive a profit of £20,000.

AN ANTI-CHRISTIAN ORGAN

September 24th, 1820 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

In the church of St. Sepulchre, Skinner Street, about seven o'clock at night a respectable looking man suddenly stood up, and vociferating some incoherent expressions, fired the contents of a pistol into the organ gallery, each side of which was crowded with charity children. A scream of horror instantly resounded from all parts, and several of the children were trampled on, and dreadfully hurt. The man was instantly secured before he had time to discharge a second pistol which he held in his hand. An officer conveyed him to the Compter where he gave his name as David Kroskine. On further enquiry it appeared that he had run away from Konigsberg in Prussia, being then believed to be insane. At the time of firing the pistol he threw about printed papers containing the following words:

'The abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet that he shall stand in the holy places is the Organ; it is the kingdom of Anti-Christ

The Music
Babylon the Beast.'

This church is now usually known as St Sepulchre's, Newgate. Skinner Street, to the east of it, disappeared during the construction of Holborn Viaduct (1863-69).

A SECOND ADVENT

February 7th, 1821 ANNUAL REGISTER

Late in the evening a man named James Boyes was brought to Bow Street office from the Chapel of Ease in Long Acre belonging to St. Martin's parish on a charge of rather an extraordinary nature, namely for going into the chapel, proclaiming himself to be Jehovah Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and commanding the people there assembled to fall down and worship him! The prisoner strutted up to the bar with an air of importance most truly ludicrous, and having in reply to questions from magistrates repeated his blasphemous pretensions in the most vehement terms, he was committed in default to bail.

A PICKWICK PARALLEL

June 14th, 1821 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

Deaths. Mr. Hadland, porkman and sausage maker at the corner of Fetter Lane, Holborn. His death was occasioned by the steam engine which he used in his cellar to cut up his sausage meat. His apron having caught in the cogs of the engine, it drew his thigh between the wheels. Immediate assistance was given, and though he was much bruised, he was able with help to walk upstairs. His constitution, however, received such a severe shock that he sunk under the effects of the accident, from debility, 48 hours after the misfortune happened.

This incident is reminiscent of one related by Sam Weller in *Pickwick Papers*.

AN HERETICAL SALESMAN

January 1822 ANNUAL REGISTER

Carlile's Shop. A new mode has been adopted for avoiding the penalty of selling seditious and blasphemous libels. The little parlour which adjoins the shop has been converted into a citadel; the glass partition which separates them is closely blinded, and the operations are carried on in ambush behind it; two of the squares of glass have been taken out, and in the place of one of them is erected a box with an aperture for the receipt of money, over which is an inscription 'Put your money in here', and in the place of the other a contrivance by which the pamphlet wanted is slid down to the purchaser from the inside of the citadel. This machinery, however, is used only for the sale of such works as have already been made the object of prosecution. The seller is invisible, and the identity of his person rendered impracticable unless the citadel be taken by storm. Waddington, heretofore the Radical standard-bearer, whose own experience has procured for him an extensive acquaintance with the persons of officers and informers, has assumed the command and conducts the operations in the front shop, where the sale of such of Carlile's publications as have not yet come under the censure of the law is carried on as usual.

Richard Carlile, a martyr in the cause of the freedom of the Press, had a shop at 55 Fleet Street. In all he endured nine years' imprisonment for selling the works of Thomas Paine and others.

DAMAGE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

February 3rd, 1822 OBSERVER

It has often been the subject of deep regret that so many of the monuments had been permitted to be defaced; and it seems that these wanton dilapidations took place during the period when the cathedral was open as a public thoroughfare. A singular fact has lately been discovered connected with these injuries. . . . Soon after the interment of the remains of Major André, a gentleman who visited the Abbey remarked that the head of the figure of Gen. Washington upon the tomb of that brave man, had been broken off; and immediately observed, that he had seen that head in America, where, he had no doubt, the head of Major André, which had shared the like fate, had also been conveyed. From this it would seem that these thefts were committed from motives of a different character than had at first been imagined.

See *London for Americans*, by the author of this book. Charles Lamb, in his *Letter of Elia to Robert Southey* (1823), included in *The Last Essays of Elia*, suggested that the damage was due to Southey when a Westminster schoolboy. It was, however, done before then.

OPEN CONFESSION

May 19th, 1822 THE SUNDAY MONITOR

On Sunday last the churchyard, and the streets leading to Bethnal Green Church, were crowded by thousands of spectators, to witness the ceremony of a young woman doing penance, by order of the surrogate of the ecclesiastical court, by standing in a white sheet in the chancel of the church, for calling her sister-in-law a bad name. However, the ceremony of the standing in the sheet was dispensed with, to the disappointment of the multitude; but the female, who was a very fine young woman attired in a white dress, repeated the following recantation in the vestry, in the presence of the rector, church wardens, the person calumniated, and five or six of her relations: 'I, S . . . G . . ., wife of J . . . G . . ., have uttered and spoken several scandalous and opprobrious words against A . . . J . . ., of St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, to the great offence of Almighty God, the scandal of my Christian religion, and the injury and reproach of my neighbour's credit, by calling her ~~xxxxxx~~, I do therefore, before God and you, humbly confess and acknowledge such offence, and am heartily sorry for the same, and do ask her forgiveness, and promise hereafter never to offend her in like manner, God assisting me.'

THE STATUE OF ACHILLES

July 7th, 1822 THE SUNDAY MONITOR

This immense bronze statue has reached its destination in Hyde Park, where it is placed to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo! It has puzzled a great many (and we confess ourselves to be amongst the number) to divine what possible connection can subsist between Achilles and the said battle. Those of more than ordinary acumen have discovered that as Achilles was invulnerable except at his heel, it is an apt comparison of the invulnerability of the Duke of Wellington, who has resisted all the attacks of his countrymen in their characteristic potentiality, for his desertion of the land of his nativity, and his opposition to the claims of five millions of his countrymen! It is added that the noble Duke's perfect *nonchalance* whenever he is attacked for stigmatising meetings of Englishmen as 'farces' is a further proof of his being a second Achilles to justify the presumption that the statue has been erected from such a consideration. But the more critical and tenaciously historical are not satisfied: they venture to think that a great violation of classical taste has been committed by exhibiting a statue of the conqueror of Troy, as at all applicable to the Battle of Waterloo. They contend that the allegorical representation ought to be perfect throughout! or at all events not to outrage the chief historical or traditionary feature of the thing. When, say they, did the noble Duke, after his triumph over Buonaparte, drag him at the tail of his charger through the streets of Brussels or over the slain at Waterloo? Or where

is it recorded that the heroic Duke chased the fallen Emperor round the entrenched lines at Quatre Bras or La Hay Sainte? All this, or something like it, is considered requisite, in order to compare the hero of Waterloo to the hero of Troy, without violating the records of antiquity and the history of the present age.

This is the extraordinary statue, near Piccadilly. A nude figure (cast from cannon captured by Wellington) yet given by the women of England.

A GRUB STREET PREACHER

June 3rd, 1823 ANNUAL REGISTER

A placard announcing that Mary Brown of Nottingham would preach on Sunday at the Chapel in Grub Street was last week pasted in different parts of the City. The novelty attracted vast crowds to the spot; and although the chapel is a spacious one, capable of accommodating upwards of two thousand people, it was completely crowded long before the time fixed for the commencement of the service; even the window sills and the avenues leading to it were filled, nor was the clerk allowed the accustomed exclusive possession of his pew. The female preacher had on a nankeen dress, and wore a cap on her head. She took for her text a passage in the Psalms, as follows: 'Rivers of water flow from mine eyes because men keep not thy commandments', on which she expatiated for upwards of an hour.

Grub Street from 1829 has been Milton Street, Cripplegate. It was a synonym for indigent authors. (See *Encyclopædia of London*.)

DESTRUCTION OF THE ELEPHANT AT EXETER CHANGE

March 2nd, 1826 THE TIMES

This enormous animal, which for many years past has been the pride and boast of the well known menagerie at Exeter Change, was yesterday afternoon destroyed by order of the proprietor in consequence of its having exhibited strong symptoms of madness. The work of death was accomplished by repeated discharges of musketry, the noise of which, together with the agonized groans of the poor beast, being distinctly heard in the Strand, caused such immense crowds to assemble, that it was found necessary to close the avenues leading to the shops at the lower part of the building, and also those leading to the apartments in which the beasts are kept. Two parties of the Bow Street Patrol . . . were also stationed, the one without and the other within the building, to prevent the effect of any rush which might be made by the assembled crowd, many of whom displayed the utmost eagerness to obtain a sight of what was going on within, and for which several expressed their willingness to pay one, or, in some instances, even two guineas each. It was not, however, thought prudent to admit any person till after the animal was so completely exhausted as to preclude all reasonable apprehension of danger. This elephant was a male animal, and had been an inmate of the menagerie for 17 years. It was brought from Bombay where it was caught when quite young, and was supposed to be about five years old when purchased by Mr. Cross, conse-

quently its present age is about 22. The effect of its unavoidable seclusion had displayed itself in strong symptoms of irritability during a certain season from the first, and these symptoms had been observed to become stronger each succeeding year as it advanced towards maturity. The animal was always kept at this season very low, and also plentifully physicked, for which latter purpose, we are informed, no less than 1 cwt. of salts was frequently administered to him at a time.

March 3rd, 1826 THE TIMES

Very erroneous statements have been made of the quantity of food consumed by this stupendous beast. The following is a correct account of its daily consumption: About two trusses of hay, ten or twelve bunches of carrots, or an equal quantity of tares, a truss of straw (given as a bed, but generally eaten), and from 30 to 35 gallons of water. The rest taken by the elephant was about four hours in the 24, during which he slept well, but upon the least strange noise he would rise with agility.

March 4th, 1826 THE TIMES

Numerous applications have been made by anatomical pupils to be permitted to be present at the dissection. . . . Applications have also been made to the proprietor, by many, for pieces of the flesh, for which liberal sums of money have been offered.

March 7th, 1826 THE TIMES

In the course of Sunday two large steaks were cut from the rump of the elephant, and were

cooked. Mr. Brookes ate part; and during the day several other persons, male and female, who partook of them, expressed no disrelish for this novel food; but, on the contrary, declared that it was pleasant to the taste. Bruce in his travels, states that the Abyssinian hunters deem the flesh of the elephant a rarity, and prefer it to the flesh of most other animals.

THE LAST LONDON STOCKS

August 7th, 1826 THE TIMES

On Friday that ancient instrument of punishment, the stocks, belonging to St. Clement Danes, in Portugal Street was removed from its situation and destroyed for the purpose of improvement of the streets. It is remarkable that these were the last remaining stocks in the streets of London.

They remained elsewhere in England. The last instance of their use seems to be at Truro in 1854.

HANDS IN POCKETS

January 1827 ANNUAL REGISTER

A gentleman betted with a friend twenty sovereigns to ten that of the first thirty men who should pass a shop in which they were to station themselves, twenty would have at least one hand in the breeches or coat pocket, and that fifteen would have both hands so placed. New Street, Covent Garden, was selected for the place of scrutiny as, from it having an extremely narrow footpath, and being a very public thoroughfare, it would offer the best example of the inconvenience of this prevalent custom. The result of the examination was that of the first thirty men who passed, 18 had both hands in their pockets and five others had one hand so situated: the proposer of the wager thus winning it hollow.

The New Street referred to is the one now called New Row running off St Martin's Lane. It is a narrow turning today with many shops.

A PLAGUE CEMETERY

May 11th, 1827 ANNUAL REGISTER

Within these few weeks past a number of labourers have been employed in digging through the Vauxhall Bridge Road in order to form the great new common sewer from Westminster to the Thames. In the progress of this undertaking, it has been necessary to excavate to a very considerable depth; and as the excavators advanced from the fields called the Pest House fields towards the pond, the soil in general became more sandy and soft, and in many places were found fragments of timber, old buckles and shoes, and the remains of wearing apparel, indicating that this place, during the Plague of 1665, had been the general cemetery for many hundreds of inhabitants of London. As the work proceeded, they met with human bones of every size and kind. The 'Pest House Fields' had in their centre a large building called the 'Pest House' to which all who could reach it before the malady had overpowered them, fled for succour. As fast as they died they were interred in the dykes dug for the purpose in the vicinity of the house, which has since been denominated the 'Five Chimnies'. Of this house, or mass of buildings, there are at present considerable remains, and the workmen, in cutting through one of the dykes, dug up a large box resembling a coffin, which contained the skeleton of five persons in a complete state. The teeth in three of them were perfect, and a solitary tuft of hair upon the head of one still remained. Upon the exposure of the bodies to the air, the bones crumbled into dust; and the skulls and some bones of three were purchased from the labourers by a surgeon of Vauxhall Bridge Road.

CURIOUS ROBBERY

December 11th, 1827 ANNUAL REGISTER

The shop of Mr. Canton, the dentist, of May's Buildings, St. Martin's Lane, was a few nights ago entered by means of skeleton keys. It was the practice of the owner to exhibit single and double rows of teeth and gums in the joining of which a considerable quantity of gold is used, and the shop window was also decorated with many gold palates – an article which, from its great use in remedying articulation, and the extreme nicety required in the formation of it, was necessarily very expensive. The thieves opened the case, and took away all the teeth and palates they could find, and amongst the former a splendid double row which was just finished for a lady of distinction who was to have had them home the following Saturday preparatory to a grand dinner at the house of one of the foreign ambassadors. Mr. Canton also lost a most valuable gold palate which he had been some time occupied in making for a gentleman. The robbery had not been long discovered when to Mr. Canton's great surprise, a man called at his shop, and handed to him a large paper parcel and a letter of which the following is a copy.

'Sir, You will receive those here grinders what you lost, as they may be of great service to you, and my grinders is good enough for all the wittels I gets. And to sell them for a trifle

would be a pity, although I want a trifle bad enough and no mistake. Please excuse my taking the gould of. From

Yours, dear sir,

Sm. Plug.

‘Whoever brings you the grinders home, act like a gentleman to him as he is a stranger to the party.’

The parcel was found on the stairs of a house in Litchfield Street. The dentist took the hint and gave the man who brought the parcel a sovereign. May’s Buildings can still be found off St Martin’s Lane. There is the side entrance to the Coliseum.

COLLAPSE OF A THEATRE

February 28th, 1828 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

This morning a most calamitous and destructive event took place at the Brunswick Theatre, Well Street, Wellclose Square. The rehearsal was going on at about half past eleven o'clock, and the entire strength of the company was on the stage preparing for the evening's exhibition (that of *Guy Mannering*), when suddenly a cracking noise was heard from the wrought iron roof of the building and almost instantaneously it fell in with a tremendous crash, throwing the front wall of the theatre into the street. The shouts and wailings of the persons inclosed within the ruins were of the most pitiable description. To facilitate the recovery of the bodies and ascertain the extent of the calamity, strong parties of the police from Lambeth Street and the Thames offices, together with a detachment of the Scotch troops stationed in the Tower, under the direction of Mr. Ballantyne, were in attendance and so far as in the agony of the moment it was practicable, rendered every assistance. Two drays . . . were passing through Well Street at the time of the falling of the wall. The one in advance escaped, but that in the rear was overwhelmed, and the team of animals killed on the spot. A baker's shop opposite the theatre was knocked down by the falling of the front wall, and the adjoining houses were much injured. The theatre was opened on Monday, February 25, and was considered a well built edifice. On the Monday night there were upwards of a thousand persons in the gallery alone; and on Tuesday also the theatre was very

full. The bodies dug out the same day were Mr. Maurice, printer of Fenchurch Street, principal proprietor; Mr. Evans, formerly a printer at Bristol; Mr. E. Gilbert, a performer; Miss Fearon, sister of Madame Fearon, and Miss Freeman, actresses; Robert Purdy, a blacksmith; Allis and Penfold, doorkeepers; Jesse Miles, a carpenter, and Levi, a clothes man who was reading the playbill at the door. Upwards of twenty sufferers were carried off to the London Hospital. Public subscriptions for the benefit of the unfortunate sufferers have been undertaken and liberally supported.

At a coroner's inquest, it was stated by Mr. Whitwell, the architect, that the accident originated not from the weight of the roof itself, nor from the bad structure of the walls, but from an additional weight of about eighty tons having been attached to the roof without his authority; the slips, the painter's gallery, etc., being all appended to it by means of iron bars. Mr. Whitwell stated that the roof being made of wrought iron, was lighter than it could have been of wood, and was so constructed that if it had only to bear the weight of its covering, it would have remained for a century or more; but that the proprietors had, in the face of the strongest remonstrances of the architect, and the roof contractor, suspended the machinery above mentioned from the roof, which it was never calculated or intended to bear; and that this was the cause of the dreadful calamity.

The Brunswick Theatre owed its origin to a relationship which existed between the late unfortunate Mr. Maurice and the family of Steele, the bookseller and publisher of the Navy List who formerly resided on Tower Hill. Steele

purchased of John Palmer his interest in the Royalty Theatre. On the return of the latter to Drury Lane, and after letting it out for a number of years to various adventurers, left it at his death to his daughter Miss Steele, a lady now between 60 and 70, and of whom Mr. Maurice was the nephew. The Royalty Theatre having been pulled down and the site lying unproductive, Miss Steele made the property of the ground over to Mr Maurice, adding the insurance money she had received, said to have been £6,000 to her gift, in order to enable him to erect a new theatre. It was begun August 2, 1827, run up with incredible speed, opened and fell down – all in less than seven months.

AN INSOLENT PAUPER

July 16th, 1828 ANNUAL REGISTER

A pauper named Taylor with a wooden leg was brought up for behaving insolently to the overseers. With the aid of 2s. a week from the parish he supported himself by selling pamphlets. Having fallen and broken his wooden leg, he applied to the parish for another, and was supplied with one. He, however, found fault with the new leg, and appealed to the overseer, stating that it was not proportioned to his natural limb, and desiring to have one of more graceful proportions. The officer desired him to represent his case to the Committee who were to sit in a few days, and he accordingly came forwards to state his grievance. The Committee, after an investigation into the condition of the wooden leg which they had supplied, came to the determination to give him another, if he required an exchange; but said that, as they could not afford always to be voting him wooden legs, he must submit to one condition, viz. that 1s. a week should be stopped until the price (12s.) of the new timber should be liquidated. To this proposition he loudly objected, accused the Committee of injustice and partiality, and finally, unbinding the wooden leg, he flung it in amongst the members of the Committee, telling them that they might wear it themselves for he would never buckle it to his stump again. He became more vociferous and abusive the moment he had cast off this part of his obligation to the parish, and refused to make even a temporary use of it to bear him to the Mansion House for the purpose of

being punished. The parish was therefore obliged to send him before the Lord Mayor in a coach.

The Lord Mayor (to Defendant). – Why, how could you suppose the way to obtain favours from the Committee was to throw wooden legs at them?

The pauper. – My Lord, the leg they gave me was made for a man a foot and a half shorter than me, and I couldn't wear it, I went so up and down with it.

The officer declared that the Defendant had gone upon the leg for three weeks without complaining.

The Lord Mayor said that the parish would do well to encourage the disposition to maintain themselves in the poor who were so great an incumbrance. A new wooden leg might incite to greater industry.

ST MARY-LE-STRAND GRAVEYARD

February 24th, 1830 ANNUAL REGISTER

The workmen engaged in excavating the ground on the eastern side of Somerset House, on which the new university is to be erected, discovered, several feet beneath the surface of the soil, the remains of a human skeleton without any coffin or shell. On digging deeper they discovered nearly a cart load of skeletons, some of which were nearly entire. The circumstance was mentioned to the authorities of Somerset House, but no one could give any information respecting it, or throw any light upon the subject. Stow, the historian, relates, that several buildings were pulled down to make room for Somerset House, among which was the original church of the Parish of St. Mary-le-Strand which then stood on the site of the houses east of Somerset House, opposite the present church. On the demolition of the sacred edifice, the bodies of all those interred therein were exhumed and buried in a hole made for the purpose. The exact spot is not mentioned, but there is very little doubt the repository thus discovered was the place chosen for the occasion, and this supposition is strengthened by the fact that the pit appears to have been of a square form and bodies, with very few exceptions, have been regularly placed, one upon another. Among them were two skulls and several bones of extraordinary dimensions, and which must have belonged to a person of gigantic structure.

The 'new university' was King's College, which was completed in 1834.

A CHIMNEY BOY'S DEATH

January 24th, 1831 THE TIMES

On Monday the 17th instant John Pavey, 10 year of age, apprentice to Briant the sweep was sent up a flue at the Omnibus Coffee House, 60 Minories, the top of which flue was from 12 to 16 feet above the roof of the house, and it appears that the brickwork was decayed and that when the sweep had reached the top the whole chimney gave way and the poor boy was found on the parapet dead with his skull beaten in. The following day an inquest was held at the Golden Lion, Goodman's Yard, and a verdict of 'Accidental Death' was brought in, which verdict could not be otherwise so long as the law permits the barbarous custom of using children instead of brushes in the sweeping of chimneys.

From Robt. Steven, Hon. Sec.

of Society for Superseding Climbing Boys.

‘RESURRECTION GENTRY’

February 10th, 1831 THE TIMES

A disturbance of a serious nature took place on Tuesday owing to a report that several dead bodies had been taken from a private burial ground in Ewer Street in the parish of St. Saviour, Southwark. The ground in question belongs to an undertaker, living in the parish, who has extensive dealings in the way of trade with the lower order of the Irish, and has also had the reputation of conducting a funeral with regard to economy so as to give universal satisfaction to those who have dealt with him up to the present occasion. A few days ago the corpse of an old man was interred in this burial place, and in less than twenty-four hours it was disturbed again by the resurrection gentry. The discovery immediately led to a further examination of the burial place by the relatives and friends of deceased persons, and for this purpose a number of individuals procured shovels and spades and commenced digging up the ground, and in a short space of time the empty coffins of seven persons recently interred were discovered. This gave rise to very general discontent to the persons present who went in a body to the house of the undertaker and threatened him. Notwithstanding his declaration of innocence as to having any participation in raising the dead, the disturbance became so serious that it was found necessary to send for constables to suppress it. In the course of yesterday several poor persons attended at Union Hall in the hope that the magistrates

would be enabled to trace the bodies of their relatives taken from the above burial ground, but it appears that many had been disinterred more than a week. The applicants were told that it would be quite useless to set about an enquiry now on the subject.

FALSEHOOD ABOUT THE FUTURE QUEEN VICTORIA

March 4th, 1831 THE TIMES

Sir,

You will oblige many of your readers and much gratify the public at large by contradicting the falsehood put forth by the editor of the *Age* newspaper on Sunday last relating to the Princess Victoria.

It is stated in the leading article of that unprincipled paper that Her Highness is so weak in her ankles and legs that it was necessary to wheel her into the drawing room in a chair on Her Majesty's birthday.

There is not one word of truth in this statement as all know who were present on that occasion. You, Sir, will be at no loss to discover the quarter from whence this and other reports of a similar nature proceed. The 'dirty creature' is here again at work, hoping to raise himself into consequence by circulating unfavourable reports on the health of the heiress to the crown. I am happy in being able to say that Her Highness enjoys excellent health, and may God avert all danger from so valuable a life. But he may save himself the

trouble of any calculations or speculations upon the subject, for that man will never be tolerated by the English people.

One cannot be too careful in referring to royalty. In 1828 Sir Walter Scott was presented to the Princess Victoria. He wrote in his *Journal* as follows:

‘I hope they will change her name – the heir apparent to the Crown as things now stand. . . . This little lady is educated with much care and watched so closely by the Duchess and the principal governess that no busy maid has a moment to whisper, “You are the heir of England”. I suspect if we could dissect the little head, we should find that some pigeon or other bird had carried the matter. She is fair, like the Royal Family, but does not look as if she would be pretty.’

Ernest Law, in his book on Kensington Palace in 1900, quoted Scott but suppressed the last sentence. Queen Victoria was then 80 years of age.

It is only recently that Laurence Houseman’s delightful plays, *Victoria Regina*, have been permitted on the stage.

A CEILING FALLS ON THE CONGREGATION

March 21st, 1831 THE TIMES

Alarm at St. Michael's, Crooked Lane.

A crowded congregation assembled yesterday morning at the above church on the celebration of divine service for the last time preparatory to the pulling down of the edifice for the approaches to the new London Bridge. A sermon was to have been preached by the rector, the Rev. Dr. Dakins, for the benefit of Bridge, Candlewick and Dowgate Ward Schools; and the church which was erected by Sir C. Wren, and is peculiarly neat and handsome, with numerous tablets on its walls to the memory of the dead, presented at the commencement of the service a very interesting spectacle. All the pews and the different aisles were filled to excess. The charity children accommodated by the organ, sang with impressive effect 'Before Jehovah's Awful Throne', in which they were joined by the voices of numerous individuals in the congregation, whose feelings were evidently touched with the solemnity of meeting for the last time in the church. Just about the conclusion of the reading of the second lesson, part of the mortar in the cornice of the ceiling over the altar where the Rector was stationed fell down. Immediately alarm seized the congregation and the larger portion, under apprehension that the church was falling, rushed with terror towards the door. For several minutes the screams and the thronging for escape were appalling, while strenuous efforts were made to compose

the minds of those who remained by assuring them that no danger was apprehended. The Rector went into the reading desk where he earnestly entreated the congregation to return to their seats and directed the singing of the 93rd Psalm. This had partly proceeded, and the congregation were gradually re-assembled, when a second, and somewhat larger fall of mortar, from the same spot instantaneously renewed the terror, and compelled the service to be abruptly concluded to the great injury of the collection for the charity.

It has been stated that great blame is attributable to the City authorities in consequence of their permitting the excavation for the London Bridge approaches to extend so near to the church before the time it could cease to be used for divine service; and it is particularly to be regretted that the Committee of the Corporation have intimated their intention to withdraw their promised contribution of £20 to the charity schools in aid of the sermon because, as they allege, greater haste was not adopted towards removing the monuments from the church.

There is still part of Crooked Lane on the west side of London Bridge. It is short and straight now. Much was cut off by the erection of the new bridge. There is a City Corporation plaque commemorating St Michael's Church, on the Monument Station.

A CHIP OF THE OLD BLOCK

June 9th, 1831 THE TIMES

A coroner's inquest was held yesterday afternoon at the Duke of Wellington Tavern, Brighton Street, Brunswick Square, touching the death of a female infant only five years old.

A juror stated to the Coroner that the present was a disgraceful transaction. The reputed father of the deceased child was the son of a celebrated deceased Scotch poet, and was holding a situation in a Government office at a salary of £400 per annum. He resided contiguous to the above neighbourhood, and it was his constant boast that he had 52 children by various females, and it was a known fact that there were several pregnant by him at that moment.

Another juror: 'You make a mistake, it is not 52, but 32' (a laugh).

Elizabeth Brooks, with whom the mother of the child lodged, gave evidence of the birth and death of the infant. Witness remonstrated with the mother on the impropriety of not burying it; but she was told that she had a right to keep 'her own' above ground as long as she pleased. Fearing that a contagious fever might be the consequence of delaying the interment longer, witness called in an officer.

Mr. Edmonson, of Judd Street, surgeon, deposed that the child died a natural death.

The mother was brought into the jury room at the desire of the jury. She is a poor squalid wretched-looking woman, apparently worn down by disease and poverty: her appearance excited sympathy.

The Coroner asked her she could think of leaving her own child in the state it was found? It was not only indecent, but dangerous to the health and safety of the inhabitants: a fever might be the result of her conduct.

She replied that her ill state of health and her distress had prevented her burying the child.

Coroner: 'You ought to have appealed to your parish and they could have assisted you.'

* She said she did not wish to do so; she could keep herself and children by hard work; she took in washing and ironing; if she had done wrong it was through ignorance; they might suspect her, but she knew she did not murder her child, and she defied them to prove it.

Juror: 'How many children have you got?'

'I have eight, but only two alive.'

Juror: 'Who was the father of the deceased?'

'I would rather decline answering the question.'

Juror: 'You have a right to answer it. Your conduct is unnatural and unmotherly, and we condemn you altogether. You have had several children by several men (or one) and you ought to answer the question, if it is only for the sake of your offspring.'

She burst into tears, saying that her poverty and ignorance had caused her not to bury her child, but she would not divulge who the father was. She had received two shillings from him which would have buried it, had she not parted with the money. She thought she was privileged in keeping the child above ground, as she knew a woman who kept her son twelve months.

Several of the jurymen pressed her to mention the name of the father, but she tenaciously refused to do so.

The jury returned a verdict that the deceased

died by the visitation of God, the jury being of opinion that the mother was reprehensible in not having the child buried previous to putrefaction.

The person above alluded to is the son of Robert Burns, the poet, and lives in Queen Square.

When Robert Burns, Junior, died at Dumfries in 1857 at the age of 71, *The Times* had an obituary notice. It said he was 'an accomplished scholar' and that 'endowed with a prodigious memory and great powers of application he had amassed a vast quantity of knowledge on a great range of subjects'. Further, 'a portion of the father's poetic mantle had fallen upon the son and in his earlier years he composed verses of considerable intrinsic merit'.

The Government post was in the Stamp Office.

AN AQUATIC ADVENTURE

January 10th, 1832 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The inhabitants of Greenwich were amused by a man walking under the surface of the water in the Thames immediately opposite the Royal Hospital. A craft was moored off the stairs to which was affixed a ladder, down the steps of which the exhibitor descended to the water. He was dressed in a manner so as to exclude the water from penetrating, and upon his head he wore a sort of helmet which covered his face, and in which there were two small bull's eyes, whereby he was enabled to see. During the exhibition he remained under the water nearly twenty minutes.

SALE OF A WIFE

July 4th, 1833 THE TIMES

On Tuesday afternoon at 2 o'clock, a number of persons assembled in the neighbourhood of Portman-market to witness an exhibition of the above description. At the appointed time the husband, accompanied by his wife, entered the crowded arena, the latter having been led to the spot in the usual manner, with a halter round her neck. The business then commenced amid the hissings and hootings of the populace, who showered stones and other missiles on the parties. The first bidding was 4s., and the next 4s. 6d., after which an interval elapsed, amidst the call of 'Going, going' from the auctioneer. At last a dustman stepped forward, and exclaimed 'I wool give five bob' (5s.). The woman was 'Knocked down' for the sum, and the dustman carried her off, nothing loth, amidst the hisses of the crowd.

INDIAN INTERMENTS

January 18th, 1835 ANNUAL REGISTER

The favourite squaw or wife of the Michigan chief Muk Coonce, who had come to this country regarding a treaty for sale of territory, died at her lodgings in Waterloo Road, Lambeth. Her name was Ah-mik waw-begun-o-je (Beaver, or the diving mouse). She was perfectly sensible of her approaching end, and refused to take any medicine, saying the Great Spirit would be offended, if she tried to evade his summons, and that not having to her knowledge committed a single evil action, she was not afraid to obey it. In consequence of the apprehensions of the chief that she would not be buried as became her station, she was received into the Christian church and baptised on Sunday morning, a few hours before her death by the name of 'Antoinette O Whow, O Qua'. On the same evening that she died, and for some time after her demise, the grief of her husband knew no bounds, whilst her sister and followers joined in a wail of heart-piercing agony. The chief caught the dead body in his arms, entreating her with most passionate expressions not to leave him alone in a strange world. On Monday and Tuesday several persons were allowed to see the remains which excited much admiration for the beauty of the features. The body was in an elegant black coffin, richly ornamented, the plate of which bore the following inscription:

Antoinette O Whow O Qua

Died 18th Jan. 1835

Aged 26.

The body was dressed in the usual habiliments of the country over which was an elaborately worked shroud; down each side was a strip of green cloth trimmed with red, a few leaves of laurel bearing a bouquet were on her breast, earrings, loaded with ornaments, were in her ears, and her cheeks were painted red; the whole was covered with a splendid Indian shawl. She was buried at St. John's, Waterloo Road. The mourners were the chief, a young squaw, and three other Indians, and Mr. Carbonel, Mr. Oxberry, and several other theatrical gentlemen. After the usual service in the church the body was committed to its last home. At this moment the behaviour of the chief was manly in the extreme, yet expressive of deep sorrow. He marked the tombstone at the foot of the grave with several Indian characters which was found to be a prayer that the foot of no stranger might profane it; and also an unerring mark for any one of his tribe who might visit the spot, to know who it was that reposed there. At the conclusion of the service a white rose was thrown into the grave and Shaw Wash (or Big Sword) pronounced a funeral oration in the Indian dialect. The Chief was to have been introduced to His Majesty on the day of the funeral.

February 9th, 1835 ANNUAL REGISTER

On Monday the 9th the remains of the young Indian Nee-mee-nam Quam, or Thunder and Lightning, were interred in the burying ground of Waterloo Church. . . . The Chief, Muc-coon-ce, The Cub, or Little Bear, walked as chief mourner; and with him Shaw-wash or Big Sword, second in command in the tribe; then followed O-Zung-

gus-kon-dah-wa, or Flying Squirrel, with whom was M. Dunord, the interpreter. . . .

When the coffin was carried into the church, the Indians took their seats near the reading desk, and by their demeanour anyone would have imagined that they understood and could feel the expressions of the solemn service. On the coffin being removed to the grave the interruption made by the crowd was most indecorous. When the clergyman had finished the service, the Chief requested Shaw-wash, his senior in years, to perform their own native service which consisted of an oration delivered in their own language, addressed to the spirit of the deceased. The orator commenced with pronouncing the name of the deceased in the same manner as he would do to call the attention of a person in life to listen to what he had to say. The address was spoken with much energy. According to their custom, the Chief threw on the first handful of earth, and the other two Indians followed his example in throwing on a handful of earth, as did also all those who especially attended the funeral. They insisted on seeing the grave of their countryman filled up before they left it; which request was complied with.

The wife of the Chief was buried in the same churchyard two weeks ago.

A CANDIDATE FOR MARRIAGE

May 1st, 1836 THE RADICAL

Thursday a tall handsome looking man, about twenty-four years of age, who stated his name to be Jeremiah Roach, residing in Great Union Street, Newington Causeway, was brought before Messrs. Codd and Barlow, sitting in petty sessions under the following singular circumstances.

P.C. Hussey, T114, stated that while on duty in the neighbourhood of North-End, about five o'clock on the previous afternoon, he received information that a man had a few minutes before divested himself of the whole of his clothing, close to the residence of Sir John Scott Lillie, and after throwing them into the Kensington Canal, had started off in the direction of town in a state of nudity. He immediately pursued him, and after proceeding some distance caught sight of him, just as he was entering the Brompton Road, followed by a large number of men and boys. After a chase of upwards of two miles the prisoner was run down near Knightsbridge. After clothing him in some old clothes, he was taken to the station-house, when he alleged that his father would not allow him to marry until he had thrown away his clothes, and consented to walk naked 'through the world'. It being evident the mind of the unfortunate man was affected, the Bench ordered him to be taken care of in the workhouse, until his friends could be communicated with.

CRUELTY TO A CHILD

September 21st, 1836 THE TIMES

An instance of the fatal effects of terrifying children occurred last week at a ladies' seminary near Hackney. A little girl, between the age of 6 and 7, for some act of childish disobedience, was thrust into a dark cellar at some distance from the house, and suffered to remain there throughout the night; the dreadful sighs and screams which the child uttered produced no effect upon her inhuman preceptors, and when the door was opened in the morning the poor child was an idiot; a medical man who was instantly summoned, has pronounced her recovery extremely doubtful.

A LUCKY BOOK-BUYER

October 15th, 1836 METROPOLITAN
CONSERVATIVE JOURNAL

On Saturday, as Mr. Francis Bowyer Relton, residing in the neighbourhood of Regent Street, was passing through the New-Cut, Lambeth, he was led to purchase at a bookstall a work on the Trinity. On his arrival home he proceeded to examine it, when one may judge his surprise at finding three Bank of England notes of £5 each between the leaves. They are of such an old date that it is doubtful if the owner is alive to claim them.

AN EARLY STEAM CARRIAGE

October 30th, 1836 THE LONDON DISPATCH

Steam Carriages on Common Roads.

With the view of further testing the practicability of steam conveyance on common roads, Mr. Walter Hancock, accompanied by a party of gentlemen interested in mechanical inventions, started on Friday morning last in his steam carriage 'The Automaton', from his station in the City Road to Epping. This line of road was selected by Mr. Hancock on account of its being, for the distance, the most hilly and uneven out of the metropolis, as well as satisfying his friends that, even with this disadvantage, from the late improvements which he has introduced, the carriage would perform, at least, 10 miles an hour, and the result proved he more than under-rated its power. On arriving at Woodford, Mr. Hancock stopped the carriage in front of the house of Mr. Rounding, the sign of the Horse and Groom, who kindly procured a fresh supply of water. After remaining for nearly a quarter of an hour, Mr. Hancock again started at a rapid pace, and having ascended Buckhurst Hill at the rate of, at least, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour, entered Epping amidst the loud cheers of some thousands who were collected in the town, it being market day, and created much astonishment among many of the country folk who had never seen such a vehicle before, and could not imagine how it was moved without horses. The party having remained for some time in Epping, returned to town and the

whole journey, notwithstanding the disadvantages before mentioned, was performed on the average of $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour. . . . The crowds along the road and different villages to see the carriage were immense.

MASTER SLENDER AND HIS BOOK OF SONNETS

October 30th, 1836 THE LONDON MERCURY

At the Court of Requests, Kingsgate Street, on Friday a very sentimental, and withal, very consumptive looking young gentleman about 20 years of age, wearing a round blue jacket, and his shirt collar turned *à la Byron*, was summoned before Mr. Commissioner Dubois, by a book-binder named Harrison, for payment of the sum of six shillings. 'What do you say to this?' asked Mr. Dubois of the defendant. Defendant: 'Say, sir, why I could write a whole volume upon it.' (Laughter.) You must know, sir, I have a taste for poetry, and having some idea of setting up in that line, I writ a great many fugitive pieces – sich as sonnets, and sich likes; and as it was my intention to employ Mr. Murray to publish 'em, I thought I'd have 'em all bound up together so as to look tidy (laughter). Well, sir, and gentlemen of the jury, this here's the book, and I mean to say the binding's a disgrace to my genius' (laughter). Mr. Commissioner: 'That's a great pity – just hand it up' – (the thing was done in blue morocco and resembled a large cyphering book). 'Will you allow me to read a portion of the contents to the

jury?' Defendant: 'With inconceivable pleasure, sir.' The Commissioner here read to the Court the following portion of a sonnet to Mr. Graham's balloon! -

'Great gawky, wonder of the hupper skies,
Oh, how I loves to see yer body rise;
There's lots of fear, although they try to mask it,
As they hangs dangling in a wicker basket;
For me when'ere I takes an hariel ride,
I means to book a place in the hinside -
And mounting huppards to the hupper skies,
I shan't feel giddy! cos I'll shet both hies!'

Although the whole Court was convulsed with laughter, Master Slender maintained the most imperturbable gravity.

The Commissioner intimated that there were odes to Daniel O'Connell - 'Sonnets on my Mother', and a few tender epistles 'To Sarah'. The worthy Commissioner, on charging the jury, observed that the value of the binding could be estimated alone by a bookbinder. The contents of the book was mere rubbish; but it did not follow the bookbinder was to charge an exorbitant price for what certainly appeared to be a very indifferent binding. The jury decided that 4s., with the payment of costs, was amply efficient.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

June 14th, 1837 ANNUAL REGISTER

An extraordinary sensation has been created in East Street, Lambeth Walk, under the following circumstances. For the last sixteen years two brothers and three sisters named Cunningham have resided at No. 129 East Street, and procured their living by mending china etc. About three weeks since one of the sisters died and was buried by Mr. Gawler (the parish clerk of Lambeth) since which time the survivors have been in an ill state of health, and on Wednesday last one of the brothers died. On Saturday evening Mrs. Moss, next door neighbour, inquired of the surviving female how her sister was, and when her brother was to be buried? She replied: 'My sister is a little better, but I have been so ill that I have not been able to go to the undertaker's to order the coffin.' Mrs. Moss thought the answer a very strange one, and at once proceeded to Mr. Gawler to whom she stated the case, and he (Mr. Gawler), accompanied by a surgeon, instantly proceeded to the house. They knocked at the door several times, but not obtaining any answer the door was forced open, and Mrs. Moss, having procured a light, they proceeded upstairs, and found the corpse of a man in the back room, and that of a female in the front both representing a most horrible spectacle, being in a state of putrefaction. On descending, a male and female were discovered in the back room, sitting on two chairs, apparently lifeless. A sedan chair was instantaneously sent for, in which they were conveyed to Lambeth Workhouse. They are still alive, but their recovery is very doubtful.

LONDON'S FIRST RAILWAY

December 14th, 1837 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The opening of the London & Greenwich Railway was celebrated and attended by the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and Aldermen, several foreign ministers, and many gentlemen connected with the scientific world. The Southwark end of the railroad was tastefully decorated with flags and banners bearing various devices. An awning with three tiers of seats was erected at each side for the accommodation of those who waited for admission to the carriage trains, and to see the trains go off and return. Five trains of carriages started, conveying 1,500 persons. At the Deptford end an address was presented to the Lord Mayor by the parochial authorities; and his Lordship having returned thanks, proceeded to inspect the Company's extensive workshop under the railway. . . . On the return the Lord Mayor's train of carriages again took the lead, and did the journey of three miles in less than eight minutes. Immediately after upwards of four hundred ladies and gentlemen sat down to a splendid *déjeuner* prepared in Bridge House Tavern at which A. R. Dottin Esq., M.P. (Chairman of the Company) presided. This great work reflects the highest honour on the gallant projector Colonel Landmann, and no less credit to the contractor, Mr. Macintosh, under whose orders no less than sixty millions of bricks have been laid by human hands since the royal assent was given to the Act of Parliament for its formation in 1833.

SUFFOCATED IN A GRAVE

September 7th, 1838 ANNUAL REGISTER

An inquest was held in the workhouse of St. Botolph, Aldgate, on the bodies of Thomas Oakes, the parish grave-digger, and Edward Luddett, a Billingsgate fish dealer, who lost their lives by suffocation from the foul air in a grave. It had been the practice in the parish, for want of sufficient space, to dig very deep graves, and pile coffins in them one upon another till they were filled. The grave in question had only one coffin in it, and Oakes went down to put in another containing the body of a still-born infant. Not returning, he was searched for, and found lying insensible at the bottom. Edward Luffett, supposing him to be in a fit, descended with ropes to place under his arm so that he might be drawn up; but immediately on reaching the bottom, he fell, as one of the witnesses said, 'as if struck by a cannon ball'. Afterwards, by advice of a surgeon in the neighbourhood, chlorate of lime was thrown into the grave; and the poisonous quality of the air being destroyed the bodies were got out. A verdict of 'Accidental Death' was returned.

DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT STATUE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH

April 28th, 1839 THE LONDON DISPATCH

The workmen who were engaged some time since in taking down an old public house, adjoining St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street, discovered in one of the cellars an ancient statue of Queen Elizabeth, which formerly stood in the nave of the old church. The parochial authorities, since its discovery, have resolved to place it on the east side of the church, fronting Fleet Street. The statue has been removed into the paved yard, and workmen will immediately commence erecting a granite pedestal on which it will be placed. Some damage was done to it after it was taken down from the old church, the top of the nose being broken off. The figure is allowed to be one of the best that was sculptured of that monarch.

John Ashton (*Gossip in the First Decade of Victoria's Reign*, 1903) commented as follows:

'An unfortunate position for many raw unlettered Irish men or women have mistaken it, owing to its environment, to be a statue of the Virgin Mary, and have devoutly crossed themselves and said their "Aves".'

This statue is now on the wall of the Church of St Dunstan-in-the-West. It was erected on Ludgate in 1586, and removed with the gate in 1760.

ACCOMMODATION FOR QUICK AND DEAD

December 13th, 1839 GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

The consecration of Trinity Church, Gray's Inn Lane, took place. It is built of brick, with a small steeple of stone.

Beneath are catacombs which will hold 1,000 coffins, and the church will accommodate 1,500 persons.

MAN BURIED ALIVE

March 4th, 1841 ANNUAL REGISTER

About ten minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon the neighbourhood of Fleet Street was thrown into a state of the most painful excitement by an alarm being raised that one of the graves, while being dug in St. Bride's Churchyard, had fallen in and buried the grave-diggers who were employed at the time in the excavation.

It appears that Cox, the grave-digger of the parish, a young man named Henry Thompson, aged 29, and another man, were engaged in digging a grave 20 feet deep at the north-eastern corner of St. Bride's Churchyard and within three or four feet of the wall passing along St. Bride's passage. About the time above-mentioned the men had attained a depth of about 17 feet when Cox and the other man, observing some of the earth giving way above a tier of coffins piled on each other nearest the churchyard wall, lost no time in effecting their escape. The unfortunate man Thompson was in the act of following them, but before he could do so, not merely earth but the entire tier of coffins piled on each other nearest the churchyard wall, gave way and fell upon him. Notwithstanding the great exertions that were made by a body of police and others who hastened to their assistance, it was not until half past five o'clock that any part of the poor fellow's body was to be seen. His head was then discovered, pressed against the head of the grave, having the whole weight of two coffins upon his chest. He was quite dead.

SALE OF VAUXHALL GARDENS

September 9th, 1841 ANNUAL REGISTER

The celebrated property, for so many years a favourite place of public amusement, was submitted to 'the hammer' under an order of the Court of Review at Garraway's Coffee House. It was stated that the property was copyhold of the manor of Her Majesty, as Lady of the manor of Kennington in right of her Duchy of Cornwall. It was subject to a quit rent of not more than £1.3.7. yearly, and comprised altogether about eleven acres. After a slight competition the property was knocked down for £20,200.

The sale was due to the bankruptcy of its former proprietors, Messrs Eye and Hughes. The gardens, situated on the north-east side of Vauxhall Station, were finally closed in 1859.

GLASS COFFIN

December 1841 ANNUAL REGISTER

One of the workmen employed at a new glass house erected at Mexborough near Doncaster, having manufactured a glass coffin, has bequeathed it to a cousin who holds a situation in Guy's Hospital in trust to enclose his body in it when he dies, in order that his cousin may see whether his corpse decays more rapidly than if he were in one of wood or lead! The coffin is made of clear glass a quarter of an inch thick, six feet two inches long, twenty-one inches across the shoulder, and fifteen inches deep. It is ornamented with the usual decorations of the 'narrow house' in blue glass with the name of the intended occupant on the lid!

AN EXPECTED EARTHQUAKE

March 17th, 1842 THE TIMES

The scene witnessed in the neighbourhoods of St. Giles and Seven Dials during the whole of yesterday was, perhaps, the most singular that has presented itself for many years. Many of the Irish resident in those localities have left for the shores of the Emerald Isle, but by far the larger number, unblest with this world's goods, have been compelled to remain where they are, and to anticipate the fearful event which was to engulf them in the bowels of the earth. The frantic cries, the incessant appeals to Heaven for deliverance, the invocations to the Virgin and the Saints for mediation, the heartrending supplications for assistance heard on every side during the day, sufficiently evidenced the power with which this popular delusion had seized the mind of these superstitious people. Towards the end of the day, a large number of them determined not to remain in London during the night, and with what few things they possessed, took their departure for what they considered more favoured spots. Some violent contests arose between the believers and the sceptics – contests which in not few cases, were productive of serious results.

The poor Irish, however, are not the only persons who have been credulous in this matter; many persons from whom better things might have been expected, were amongst the number who left London to avoid the threatened catastrophe. To the Gravesend Steamboat Companies the 'earthquake' proved a source of immense gain; and the same may be said with regard to the

different railways. Long before the hour appointed for the starting of steamboats from London Bridge Wharf, Hungerford Market, and other places, the shore was thronged by crowds of decently attired people of both sexes; and, in many instances, whole families were to be seen with an amount of eatables and drinkables which would have led one to suppose that they were going a six-weeks voyage. About 11 o'clock, the *Planet* came alongside the London Bridge Wharf, and the rush to get on board of her was tremendous, and, in a few minutes, there was scarcely standing room on board. The trains on the various railways were, during the whole of Tuesday and yesterday morning, unusually busy in conveying passengers without the proscribed limits of the metropolitan disaster. To those who had not the means of taking trips to Gravesend, or by railways, other places which were supposed to be exempted from the influence of the 'rude commotion' about to take place, were resorted to. From an early hour in the morning, the humbler classes from the east end of the metropolis sought refuge in the fields beyond the purlieus of Stepney. On the north, Hampstead and Highgate were favoured with a visit from large bodies of the respectable inhabitants of St. Giles's; and Primrose Hill, also, was selected as a famous spot for viewing the demolition of the leviathan city. The darkness of the day, and the thickness of the atmosphere, however, prevented it being seen.

AN ELEPHANT'S REVENGE

April 29th, 1842 ANNUAL REGISTER

A few days since John Glascott, groom to a gentleman named Turner, was conveyed to the London Hospital with a severe fracture of the leg near the ankle. The injury was caused by an elephant; and is an additional proof that that animal remembers wrongs and seldom fails to resent them.

In the morning Glascott had been witnessing the performance of the elephant then exhibited in a booth in the Commercial Road East; and he took it into his head to amuse himself by teasing the animal. Nothing more happened then, but in the afternoon Glascott returned to the booth with his children and, whilst they were entertained by the feats of the animal, it suddenly wound its trunk round the man's leg and did not uncoil it until the limb was fractured. The surgical treatment Glascott received in the Hospital at first succeeded, but in a day or two erysipelas attacked the system and today terminated fatally.

PUDDLE DOCK

April 26th, 1844 NEWS OF THE WORLD

At the Mansion House on Thursday, Gore, the contractor for cleansing the streets of the City, appeared to answer for having neglected to remove an immense mass of filth from Puddle Dock. The Lord Mayor had, passing through Earl Street, Blackfriars, been assailed by 'a compound of villainous smells' which he considered to be calculated to cause a pestilence. The defendant said that the laystall at Puddle Dock was a public laystall, in which everybody who pleased might deposit loads of offensive matter, and that he had it, notwithstanding, regularly swept every day. Inspector Todhunter said that he had gone to examine the laystall, and certainly nothing could be more horrible. He saw a person on the spot who called himself Mr. Gore. . . . He used the argument in defence of the system of accumulating the masses of filth in this laystall, that he was always sure to get an appetite by being so frequently in the neighbourhood, and that he could always eat a good beefstake for his breakfast on the spot (laughter). The Lord Mayor: The defendant has acted in the most disgraceful manner in not abating the nuisance, which he is paid so largely to remove. I shall discharge the summons, and instruct the City Solicitor to proceed at once by indictment against him.

A BODY-FINDING EXPERIMENT

June 28th, 1844 THE TIMES

On Tuesday a fisherman residing in Woolwich, named Michael Sullivan, had been drinking rather freely during the morning, and contrary to the dissuasive arguments of his friends, proceeded in his boat to the middle of the river to catch whitebait, and while engaged in hauling in his net was observed by several persons on shore to overbalance himself and fall into the river. Drags were immediately procured, and every attempt made to recover his body without success. Some of his friends insisted upon trying the following singular plan to discover the body, but without the anticipated result: A bundle of straw was taken to the middle of the river in a boat, and on arriving as near as possible at the spot where he fell overboard, the straw was set on fire while floating on the surface of the water, and allowed to be carried onwards by the tide, then running down, the parties in the boat expressing a firm belief that the fire would go out and the smoke cease to be evolved over the place where the body had settled in the river. The experiment failed entirely, as after considerable labour in dragging the river for some distance round the place where the straw ceased to burn and to smoke, the parties gave up further trial as hopeless, and the body has not yet been found.

RAIN A SPOIL-SPORT

July 7th, 1844 NEWS OF THE WORLD

Match between the County of Kent against All England
The clouds overcharged with water appeared to have preserved themselves until they had arrived immediately over the ground, and then to have burst, for within ten minutes of the commencement of the rain, the ground was many inches deep; it was, in fact, a perfect river streaming in one moving mass from the upper to the lower part of the place. In two minutes every person upon the ground presented the appearance of having been dragged through a pool, and ere the majority could reach (or we should rather say approach – for shelter there was not for more than a few hundreds) a covering, all were nearly ankle deep in water, particularly those who made for the tavern. Such a scene was never before witnessed at Lord's. Umbrellas, such was the violence of the storm, were perfectly useless. At one part of the ground might be seen the Marquis of Anglesea and his daughters riding on horseback, drenched, although servants were holding umbrellas over the latter; whilst in another were huddled together under the walls and fences, with the vain hope of protection, hundreds of pedestrians of all ranks, and many there were who gladly paid half a crown for a seat only, not for the transit, in the two or three omnibuses and cabs, which at the moment chanced to be at the gates. Indeed we heard that one omnibus contrived to accommodate as many as 24. . . . The continuance of the rain put an end to play for the day.

ROMANTIC FATE OF AN OX

December 22nd, 1844 NEWS OF THE WORLD

On Monday morning, a fine fat ox, belonging to a butcher in Wells Street, Oxford Street, while being driven with several others through Brooks Market, Holborn, suddenly left the herd, and walked into the private entrance of a house, occupied by Mr. Wynne Tailor . . . and after walking up the passage, became firmly fixed at the end. The passage was so peculiarly constructed that it was not possible to get it out alive; and after the animal had remained in the same position from Monday morning until Tuesday night, it was found necessary to kill it, which was not done without considerable difficulty. So swollen had the beast become from its cramped position, that it required the united exertion of two horses and upwards of twenty men to extricate it.

BINDING OF SATAN

March 23rd, 1847 THE TIMES

During the past two or three weeks, a number of persons have been going round the streets, on the Surrey side of the water, wearing belts, like those worn by the Fire Brigade, on which passages from the Scriptures are painted, carrying with them an inkhorn and long sheets of paper, soliciting signatures to what they pretend to be a petition to Heaven, for the binding of Satan, the Prince of Darkness. So eager are those persons to get the paper signed, that men, women, and children are stopped indiscriminately, and requested to sign. Those who are too young to sign, or unable to write their names, have the same done for them by the men, who do not attempt to disguise the fact of belonging to the followers of Joanna Southcott. Upon several occasions, a great deal of confusion has been created by the parties, for they generally manage to go about with knots of forty or fifty persons; and occasionally, discussions ensue, which are calculated to bring the Scriptures into perfect ridicule. One person, more intelligent than the persons who are hawking the petitions about, inquired who it is that will present the petition? when the man replied, with the greatest coolness, that as soon as a sufficient number of names are attached to the petition, it will be presented to the Throne of Mercy by Joanna Southcott herself. Surely it is high time that such exhibitions were put down by the police.

OVERCROWDING IN GRAVEYARDS

January 6th, 1848 THE TIMES

Sir,

Having seen some observations, in past papers, on the practices in various burial grounds in London, which observations have certainly tended to restore decency in the grounds alluded to, and very probably have prevented disgusting scenes being enacted in many others, I think an occasional exposure of any want of decorum in respect to burials may conduce to keep up or procure a proper regard for the feelings of the living in all burial grounds.

I live near St. Pancras Old Church, and have often been surprised at the number of funerals that take place there every Sunday, between the hours of 4 and 5 o'clock. But it is only lately that I have discovered how the interment of so many, within so short a space of time, is despatched. One Sunday in last month (December 12) between 30 and 40 bodies (I am told full 40, including stillborns, which are not registered) were piled in one common grave, amidst the murmurs of the relatives and friends of the deceased. One funeral service was said over the lot, and one replacing of earth covered the whole. The covering of earth in this ground is frequently very shallow, often only two or three feet deep; and I have heard of a mourner having recently in his indignation, pulled out his rule and proved to the bystanders that from the surface of the top coffin to the level of the ground was less than one foot. The minister of the place tells me he has no control over all this. Perhaps the sexton, to whom

the whole discretion of grave-digging and grave-filling is, I believe, intrusted, cannot help it either, on account of the fulness of the ground and the numbers brought at a time. But surely there ought to be a power residing somewhere of remedying this want of space, if want of space is to be the plea for huddling so many bodies in a pit. Every parishioner has a right to decent burial in his parish, and ought to have a separate grave, and sufficiently deep; and if space be wanted after a series of years (I might say after a series of ages, as to this ground), to accomplish this, why should not adjoining ground be taken and consecrated....

AN INSULTED BUTLER

January 10th, 1848 OBSERVER

At Marlborough Street on Wednesday last, a person of stylish appearance, carrying a very handsome walking-stick, ascended the rostrum for applicants, and begged permission to state a case of great ill usage to which he said he had been recently subjected. He had engaged himself as a butler to a gentleman who lived a short distance in Kent. On Christmas Eve his master requested him to go into the kitchen to squeeze lemons. He told his master, with great civility, that it was not the place of a butler to go into the kitchen to squeeze lemons, and therefore he must beg of him to give his orders to some of his inferior servants. The master insisted on his obeying the orders he had given him. He refused decidedly; and then, as he was about to leave the drawing room with the tray, he received a push, which so accelerated his pace that the tray fell out of his hands. His master told him to pick up the fragments of broken china and glass, but this, he, of course, objected to, as it was no more the duty of a butler to perform such a piece of drudgery than it was to squeeze lemons. His young master told him he must either be drunk or mad, and insisted that he should go to bed at once. He refused, and his arms were then pinioned by his young master, and he was constrained to go to bed. The next morning, being Sunday morning, he was called into the library, paid his wages, and ordered to leave the house *instantly*. He was not allowed even a servant to carry his luggage, 'and I do assure Your Worship,' continued the butler

indignantly, 'I was obliged to carry my own portmanteau and my carpet bag myself for upwards of half a mile.' Mr. Bingham: 'What is the object of your application to me?' Butler: 'To know whether I can get any redress for what I have done.' Mr. Bingham: 'I don't think you have the smallest chance of redress; indeed I think you might have done as your master requested you. Squeezing lemons I do not think a very degrading employment even for a butler. I daresay, when your master engaged you he intended to have the ordinary services rendered by persons in your line of life; and though he did not exactly make a schedule of what you were to do he might very well expect you would squeeze a few lemons if required.' Butler: 'But it was to make punch.' Mr. Bingham: 'I don't see that at all alters the case. I recommend you to put up quietly with the treatment you have received, which I must say I think is no more than most masters would have done under the same circumstances.' The butler shook his head and left the court with the air of a deeply injured man.

1849—1949

INTERNATIONAL VERMIN

January 15th, 1852 THE TIMES

RUSSIAN FLEAS. — 200 of these little creatures are exhibiting daily, from 1 till 10, at 5 Leicester Square, their performances astonishing all beholders. Fleas of all nations, giving their varied entertainments, firing cannon, stage-coach and omnibus conveyance, etc. Kossuth on four Austrian Fleas; Louis Napoleon, on the Russian Flea Hercules, 5 years old. Admission 1s.

WHAT AN INVADING ARMY MIGHT DESTROY IN LONDON

February 26th, 1853 PUNCH

We rejoice in the pacific assurance of Louis Napoléon. We trust that the foot of an invader will never profane these shores — Puddle Dock and the contiguous embankments more particularly to wit. Yet if ever the French do come to London, there are several bits of mischief which they might do for our great advantage in the end. They might, perhaps, blow up Temple-Bar, they might certainly demolish the iron railings round St. Paul's. It would be a good job if they were to raze the Court of Chancery to its foundations, and annihilate the whole of Doctor's Commons. If they were to burn the National Gallery — saving the pictures — it would be no very great harm; and, considering the present state of the river, they certainly would abate a very nasty nuisance if they could manage to set the Thames on fire.

GRUESOME GRAVEYARDS

April 2nd, 1853 LONDON CHRONICLE

There may be some who conscientiously believe that many exaggerated statements have been made on this subject . . . if they will not believe the evidence of medical men; if they deny the truth of the assertion of such men as Mr. Walker or Mr. Robert Watt who have noticed the abominable practices which took place in Spa Fields, St. Giles's, Camden Town, Ray Street, and other burial grounds, where interments are of daily occurrence, and yet, with all their accumulated and yet accumulating corruption, had not risen one inch in height, and of what had become of the bodies, the bone-house fires could only give them a clue; – men who could produce tables made out of the lids of coffins, which were sold to a poor inhabitant of Vineyard Gardens, Clerkenwell, by the grave-digger; men who could . . . prove to them that many a time the bereaved widow and orphan have wept over the supposed remains of a beloved partner or parent – when those still honoured and cherished remnants had been – after undergoing every imaginable insult and mal-treatment from the axe and crow-bar of the infamous servants of Mammon – committed to the flames, and then scattered hither and thither. Let such visit some of the metropolitan graveyards – let them go to the pauper graveyard of Clerkenwell Parish, not alone as it *did*, but as it *does* exist – let them smell there the effluvia of dead bodies; let them see there graves opened, and not closed until filled in, to within a few inches of the top with bodies: – let them hear

our beautiful Church Service for the Dead gabbled over by a workhouse pauper decked in sacred habiliments; – let them hear the statements of sickness and nausea; the description of sights unnatural and worse than barbarian, which the inhabitants would furnish them with: and *then*, if they will not, seeing, believe, neither would they ‘though one rose from the dead’. . . .

The entrance to this ground is through a low narrow passage, on one side of which there is a broker’s shop, and a slaughter-house on the other. We should imagine it to be less than eighty square feet in size, and yet scarcely a week passes without interments. It is surrounded by the houses of the lower orders, with the Fleet Ditch running at the back of it. When a pauper is to be buried a hole is dug, the coffin lowered, and is there left exposed until a brother pauper is placed on the top of it, and so on until the hole is filled in; when the ground is levelled, and remains so until it is necessary to open another grave. The place abounds with rats. The effluvia arising from this place, as described by the inhabitants, is fearful in hot weather: and fevers, diarrhoea and cholera, are its concomitants.

No pillowed mound – no sign of a last resting place – no indication of vegetation, if we accept a shrub or two, which seem to struggle, with a doubtful existence, against the pestilential vapours which impede their growth – no blade of grass to impede the eye of the mourners, nothing to mark it a graveyard except the miasma arising from its confined tenants, and by which dead paupers revenge the living for the dead.

This is reminiscent of Dickens’s description of the burial ground in which ‘Nemo’, Lady Dedlock’s lover, was buried.

At the time this issue of the *London Chronicle* appeared, *Bleak House* was being published serially. The graveyard therein described was that of St Mary-le-Strand in Drury Lane; its site is now that of a playground. One of Dickens's letters makes identification certain.

A SHOCKING ACCIDENT

April 26th, 1853 LONDON CHRONICLE

This evening a shocking accident occurred at the Rectory House of St. Martin's Orgar, Martin's Lane, New Cannon Street, City. Three men were endeavouring to raise an oaken frame and bracket intended to receive the clock which it is intended to place in the tower now occupying the site of the old church, when the rope broke, and the frame, weighing 12 cwt., struck one man on the head, shattering his skull, and breaking both the legs of another.

This was the Church of St Martin Orgar. It was demolished in 1820 with the exception of the tower which was retained until 1851. On the demolition of the latter, a new tower was erected, and this was the one referred to. It still remains, and is marked by a City Corporation plaque.

THE FEMALE BLONDIN

August 13th, 1861 THE TIMES

Considerable excitement prevailed yesterday afternoon in the vicinity of Cremorne Gardens on account of the announcement that a lady calling herself the 'Female Blondin' was about to cross the river on a tightrope extending from the gardens to a wharf at Battersea. Through some deficiency in the guide-ropes, as they are called, the feat was not completely accomplished, and when the lady, who had started from Battersea, had performed about four fifths of her perilous journey, she was compelled to sit down, and ultimately descended into a boat. The courage displayed under these trying circumstances created almost a greater amount of admiration than would have been produced had the artist walked all the way from Battersea to Cremorne, and of her ability to perform the feat there is not the slightest doubt. Both sides of the river were densely thronged, and though the performance was over at half past 7, the roads leading to Chelsea were scarcely passable at nine o'clock on account of the returning crowds.

Cremorne Gardens were closed in 1877. A full account of their history will be found in *By Chelsea Reach*, by Reginald Blunt (1921).

THE MARTYRS' MEMORIAL

October 9th, 1867 DAILY TELEGRAPH

A pillar box for the reception of letters has just been placed opposite the patients' entrance of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, near Duke Street, Smithfield, and it is a singular fact that the site of its erection is without doubt where the stake was placed at the time the martyrs suffered, as the spot accords exactly with the one designated in old engravings of the period so that its identity may be clearly defined. Two of these may be found in Chester's *Life of John Rogers*, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, who was the first martyr to the Christian faith in Smithfield, and the author, in writing of the spot where Rogers suffered, says the identical spot where the fatal stake was usually placed has been sufficiently identified. For a long time a square piece of pavement, composed of stones of a dark colour, a few paces in front of the entrance gate of the church of St. Bartholomew-the-Great traditionally marked the locality. In the year 1849, during the progress of certain excavations, the pavement was removed, and beneath it, at a distance of about three feet, was found a number of rough stones and a quantity of ashes, in the midst of which were discovered a few charred and partially destroyed bones. This is precisely where the pillar box has now been placed by order of the Postmaster General.

The phrase about the first martyr is most invidious. It is evident the writer was not a papist!

The illustration in Chester's book was taken from the first edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, popularly known as 'The Book of Martyrs', and, as stated, bears out the statement as regards the exact place of execution.

There is a tablet on the wall of the hospital commemor-

ating the martyrdom of John Rogers, John Philpot, and John Bradford.

(See also *London Mystery and Mythology*.)

THE FIRST TRAFFIC LIGHTS

December 8th, 1868 EXPRESS

The regulation of the street traffic of the metropolis, the difficulties of which have been so often commented upon, seems likely now to receive an important auxiliary. In the middle of the road, between Bridge Street and Great George Street, Westminster, Messrs. Saxby and Farmer, the well-known railway signalling engineers, have erected a column 20 feet high, with a spacious gas lamp near the top, the design of which is the application of the semaphore signal to the public streets at points where foot passengers have hitherto depended for their protection on the arm and gesticulations of a policeman—often a very inadequate defence against accident. The lamp will usually present to view a green light, which will serve to foot passengers by way of caution, and at the same time remind drivers of vehicles and equestrians that they ought at this point to slacken their speed. The effect of substituting the red light for the green one and of raising the arms of the semaphore—a simultaneous operation—will be to arrest the traffic on each side. A more difficult crossing-place could scarcely be mentioned, and should the anticipations of the inventor be realised similar structures will no doubt be speedily erected in many other parts of the metropolis.

The idea does not appear to have caught on. The place was chosen, it was said, for the preservation of the lives of peers of the realm and Members of Parliament.

A SUICIDE'S GRAVE

August 1886 THE CITIZEN

In excavating a trench for a main for the Commercial Gas Company, the workmen of Messrs. John Aird & Sons made a remarkable discovery a few days ago. At a point where Cannon Street Road and Cable Street, in St. George's-in-the-East, cross one another, and at a depth of six feet below the surface, they discovered the skeleton of a man with a stake driven through it, and some portions of a chain were lying near the bones. It is believed that the skeleton is that of a man who murdered a Mr. and Mrs. Marr, their infant child, and a young apprentice in their house in Ratcliff Highway in 1811. . . . He hanged himself while under remand in Coldbath Fields Prison. A Coroner's Jury having brought in a verdict of *felo-de-se*, the murderer was buried in accordance with the custom of the time.

See note under August 27th, 1755.

THE LAST 'CHARLEY' WATCHBOX

April 23rd, 1889 CITY PRESS

Perhaps few have noticed the removal within the last few days of the last of the 'Old Charley' watch-boxes. I refer to the one outside Gosling's Bank in Fleet Street, which is about to be pulled down. The last 'Charley' who occupied this box was, I believe, murdered in it. This box was made to open out at night, and close up in the daytime, and from the fact that iron railings have existed in front of it for very many years, it could only have been left in its position out of respect for its antiquity.

One remained in Clapham Road until 1941.

THE LAST 'CHARLEY'

September 27th, 1889 CITY PRESS

In the person of Mr. William Mason, who died on Wednesday at the age of 89, we lose the last survival of the Charleys who used to patrol the streets prior to the establishment in 1839 of the City Police Force. Another fact of interest is that as beadle to Alderman Finnis he assisted in the Lord Mayor's Show of 1856 – the last occasion on which the pageant proceeded to Westminster by water.

TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD'S OLDEST INHABITANT

January 19th, 1907 DAILY GRAPHIC

The celebrated statue of the Highlander, which for over a hundred years has mounted guard over a tobacconist's shop in Tottenham Court Road, is not, after all, to leave the thoroughfare which he has helped to make famous. Wide publicity was recently given to the fact that the shop beside which the figure stood was to be demolished, and that the Highlander was therefore for sale. So many offers were made to the owners of the statue that bidding ran into quite extraordinary figures. The old Scot's future is, however, quite decided now, as he has been secured by Messrs. Catesby and Sons, and will henceforth be seen at their 'Linoland' in Tottenham Court Road, not many yards from his old home.

The 'old Scot' can still be seen at the main entrance of Catesby's premises, 64 Tottenham Court Road.

MAN WHO WALKED ON AT THE OVAL

August 4th, 1919 · DAILY NEWS

Although it has been said with a reasonable amount of truth that speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts, the incident which occurred at the Oval can hardly be regarded as a case in point. Shortly before four o'clock, when the Australians, in spite of a useful lead, were pottering about as if every wicket was worth a king's ransom, a man suddenly flew out of the crowd as a cork flies out of a bottle, and walked across the hallowed pitch towards the umpire. The figure bore no resemblance to the super who walks on and indicates that the kerridge waits. This man, who must have heard lions roar in the jungle, was an ambassador, and he came to the middle with hasty strides, to ask the umpire when the colonials would declare their innings. Recollecting that Luther had flung his inkpot at the devil, he waved his arms about like a policeman on strike at Tower Hill and shook his fist at the pavilion. Eventually Herbert Thompson, the umpire, and C. T. A. Wilkinson, the Surrey captain, persuaded him to return to the benches 'below the gangway'.

On the way back he turned a somersault, and the high-browed critics, nearly won over, said that the effect of the man's mission had now been spoiled. Now, on the contrary, I thought he gave the crowd all the sense of gaiety which the Australians had denied it. . . . Of course, it was a great offence to walk on to a first class pitch, yet it takes a wise man to be a fool. This man ought to have stifled his holy rage; bowed low

before the high altar of convention; written to *The Times*. But instead of all this he went boldly off at the deep end and represented the great bulk of a timid public opinion. . . . For my own part I shall be content to point out that the Australians . . . declared about half past four, and left Surrey 375 to win in two hours and a quarter.

A SUICIDAL SPARROW

July 4th, 1936 THE TIMES

M.C.C. v. Cambridge University

A further wicket might have fallen had not a sparrow chosen to commit suicide in an altruistic attempt to save T. N. Pearce's wicket from a ball from Jahangir Khan—it is extraordinary that the rate of mortality of sparrows on cricket grounds is not higher. This gesture on the part of the sparrow might well have prevented the extra half-hour and an exciting finish.

The ball and stuffed sparrow are amongst the exhibits in the museum at Lord's Cricket Ground.

The following is an extract from *The Cricketer* for August 8th, 1953:

'The tale has often been told of how Knott killed a butterfly in flight, and the retelling of this occurrence has frequently brought forth reminders of how Jahangir Khan killed a sparrow in flight when bowling at Lord's. Quite recently there has been another case of the decease of a sparrow which did not take sufficient precautions. This time it was killed by a hit. During the Worcestershire and Leicestershire fixture at Worcester, Smithsone drove a ball for four and the bird, hopping about on the grass just outside the boundary fence, was struck and killed. . . . Knot, who killed his butterfly while bowling to Sir Derrick Bailey, the Gloucestershire captain, at Portsmouth in August 1951, put his capture into a matchbox and kept it as a memento.'

OLD TEMPLE BAR

May 26th, 1937 THE TIMES

Many will endorse Sir Andrew Taylor's plea for the restoration of the old Temple Bar to a suitable position in or near the City of London.

While the bulk of the old stones lay in the builder's yard from 1878-88, the capitals and bases of the eight pilasters were carried away to Swanage in Dorsetshire, and eventually found a resting place in a tea garden on the sea front from where I rescued them and had them conveyed to my garden in Surrey. Subsequently they were erected in Trafalgar Square, Chelsea; and in Jubilee year I presented them to the London Museum. Anyone who visits the erection at Theobald's Park will at once recognise that the capitals are dummies, and that the four facing the roadway are superior imitations of those facing the park.

Letter from CARLETON F. TUFNELL.

Presumably the 'Jubilee Year' was 1935.

AN INVOLUNTARY NUDIST

November 16th, 1939 LISTENER

These days of evacuation, when a large proportion of the male population consists of deserted husbands and fathers who are muddling through somehow, must be days of innumerable minor domestic disasters. But few of these grass-widowers can have suffered such a chain of misfortunes as a friend of Howard Marshall who is 'living alone, cooking his own food and generally messing about'. 'Well one morning,' said Mr. Marshall, 'he was about to get into his bath when he thought he'd like to look at the paper. It was the morning after Molotov's speech. And so, without bothering to put anything on since the house was empty, he withdrew his toe from the bath and paddled out into the hall to see if the paper had been put through the letter-box where the boy usually shoved it.

'It was not there as it happened. He was a persistent sort of fellow, so he thought "Well, perhaps the boy's put it on the steps". So he opened the door a crack and there sure enough was the paper. But it was a couple of steps down, and he could not reach it. Still, he knew that the houses opposite were empty - they'd all been evacuated too, and nobody was living there. And there was no one in the street - he could see that. So he thought "I'll just nip out and get it - it'll be all right", which I must admit is just what I should have thought in the same circumstances.

'So he did not bother to put anything on, and out he nipped. As he bent down to pick the paper up . . . bang went the door - a puff of wind had

shut it. And there he was without a stitch on clutching a newspaper and completely unable to get back into the empty house. A bit embarrassing – wasn't it for a respectable citizen? And he felt his position rather acutely. However, he did not panic. He was a level-headed soul, and he did what he could for the proprieties by wrapping a newspaper round him. Incidentally it was an illustrated newspaper, one of the smaller ones – he swore in future he'd take in the twopenny daily – and he thought the best thing he could do would be to go and find some sympathetic neighbour. But unfortunately he realised that all his friends in the street were away. So he picked on chance, and went to one of the houses and rang the bell.

'I suppose it is a little alarming to find a man clad only in an illustrated newspaper standing on your doorstep in the early morning. And so it was not surprising that the little maid who answered the door gave one shriek and tried to slam it in his face. Luckily he managed to get his foot in and shove himself in the hall whereupon the maid ran wildly upstairs screaming "Lunatic, lunatic!" And while my friend tried valiantly to explain, the lady of the house very properly rang up the police. And before he had managed to make out a case for himself two things happened swiftly. First a patrol car arrived with three constables inside. And then, to crown it all, the air-raid sirens went.

'Well, it was obviously one of those days. So my friend took the bull by the horns and said "Look here, we've got to get under cover, and I am quite sure that lady won't like getting under cover with a lunatic. So why don't you take him back to my house? It's only just down the road –

burst open the door and use my cellar if you want to."

'Anyhow, to cut a long story short, they did shove him in the car and the large serjeant did put his shoulder to the door and smash it open just in time to find cascades of bath water flowing into the hall. And if that isn't a good start to the day I don't know what is.'

A SPLIT INFINITIVE

October 21st, 1940 THE TIMES

Cornelius Ignatius O'Leary, aged 51, of Newton Road, Bayswater, was accused before Mr. W. J. H. Brodrick at Clerkenwell on Saturday of defacing A.R.P. notices exhibited by Holborn Borough Council. He said the reason he wrote on the notices was to help the country against the inefficiency of the authorities. There was a split infinitive on one of them he alleged. He complained to the Magistrate that the Police had only quoted a few of the sentences he wrote. They were really a complete philosophy of protest. In reply to Mr. Brodrick, O'Leary said he was living on his own with a cat and dog. He had two sisters who had evacuated to Llandudno. Mr. Brodrick said the Court missionary would arrange for O'Leary to go to Llandudno with his cat and dog, and he was discharged under the Probation of Offenders Act.

The Solicitor to the London Passenger Transport Board split an infinitive in appealing to the House of Lords in the case of *Mosscrop v. London Passenger Transport Board*. Happily, with a war on, their lordships forgave the offence.

BRITAIN'S OLDEST MAN?

September 25th, 1941 THE TIMES

The death is reported of Britain's oldest man, Mr. Alfred Charles Arnold at Woolton, near Liverpool, and his age is given as 112. Five years ago (when he told me he was 105) he several times came to tea with me in Victoria Street and we had frequent other communications. In build he was quite on the small side, thin, active, alert, and in manner most independent, in no way showing any sign of age, still less of great age; his sight and hearing were quite good; he had a nice voice and was full of conversation and pleasing to talk with. I gathered that he lived quite alone in a room near St. Mark's, Marylebone; how existing I could not learn; he scorned the idea of an old-age pension, but welcomed gifts of oranges. He was specially keen to get rooms in the Bond Street area so that he could receive and instruct persons who would wish to consult him on the Yoga system to which he personally felt he owed so very much; he could not get help to do this and that depressed him.—C. B. GABB.

Dr Maurice Ernst, of the Centenarian Club, was scornful of the alleged age of Arnold. He said he saw him about ten years before his death, and then he judged him to be no more than 65. A leading article in *The Times* intimated 'a mild incredulity'. It is evident that neither Dr Ernst nor *The Times* leader writer had seen a pamphlet which the author of *London in the News* found on a second-hand bookstall. In this it is stated that he was baptised in St George's Church, Bloomsbury, in 1829. The entry is in its baptismal register. No doubt Arnold attributed his remarkable appearance for

his years to Yoga. His age is given as 112 in the register of deaths at Somerset House. The cause of death is given as hypostatic pneumonia and senile decay. He was described as a retired journalist of 28 Ferme Park Road, Stroud Green, London.

A correspondent of the *Evening Standard* has drawn attention to the gravestone in Great Hockham Churchyard (Norfolk): it bears the following inscription:

Sacred to the memory of
Joseph Ashton
who died Oct. 8th, 1881.
Aged 112 years.

The great age, however, cannot be considered as authentic as Arnold's, for there is no evidence as to date of birth.

LION SCENTED THE 'MUNICIPAL MECCA'

October 22nd, 1943 STAR

A lion escaped today from a box car attached to a train which pulled up at Clapham Junction Station.

The lion was in transit between St. Pancras and Petersfield, travelling in a wooden crate inside a railway box car. It broke out of the crate, went to the window of the car, and when the train stopped, jumped out of the window on to the platform.

After strolling down the line, it went into a sunken garden in Plough Road, where railway men barricaded it with sleepers and ropes.

The lion seemed fairly comfortable, but Home Guards who were called out took no chances, and Major Ford, in command of the Clapham Junction Company, stood with an automatic rifle at the ready.

Mr. Hubert Watts, a shunter, said, 'Three or four of us were working on the line when we saw the lion coming. We drove it gently along, away from the station. It seemed as scared of us as we were of it. Our chief concern was that it should not get on the electric line.'

Later the lion was safely back in the train.

'Municipal Mecca' was a phrase of John Burns regarding Battersea. It had previously been applied to Birmingham. He died in January, 1943. (See *John Burns: Labour's Lost Leader*, by the author of this book.)

CIVIL SERVANT MADE ILL BY UNDERWORK

May 30th, 1945 DAILY SKETCH

The 35-year-old daughter of a retired clergyman who was directed into Admiralty service two years ago, has had a breakdown in health because she had not enough to do. She applied to the head of her department for a transfer to a department where more work was done. Her application was refused.

Then came her breakdown in health and her doctor has issued a certificate saying that her nervous ailment was directly due to boredom because of the lack of mental and physical exertion at her work. He recommended her transfer to a department where more work was done.

This week the woman, who has spent much of her two years' service knitting, reading and just sitting in her office, was transferred to another department and told there would be more work for her there.

Mr. L. C. White, general secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, told their conference at Blackpool yesterday: 'The Admiralty's waste of man-power during the war has been a public scandal.'

Dr C. E. M. Joad, in one of his autobiographical volumes, admitted that when he retired from the Ministry of Labour the only difference was that he prepared his lectures and wrote his books at home instead of at the office. On the other hand, Ivor Brown, reviewing in *The Observer* a recent book on the Civil Service entitled *The Fountains in Trafalgar Square* wrote:

'I entered this grade once in the hope that I could be a literary gentleman in my plentiful spare time, as used to be the case in the days of Walkley and Austin Dobson. But those spacious times had already gone.'

'THE WICKED LADY'

November 20th, 1945 EVENING NEWS

When Queen Mary went to the pictures last night the film that she saw was censored—for one performance only. Not even the oldest inhabitant of Wardour-street can remember this happening before.

The film was called 'The Wicked Lady'. It is one of those Restoration melodramas and it occasionally drops into Restoration language.

Two of Queen Mary's Ladies-in-Waiting went along to the cinema a few hours before Queen Mary arrived and the film was shown to them privately.

They made certain comments.

It was not possible to delete anything from the film: but while Queen Mary was seeing it passages in the dialogue were damped down so that they were hardly audible.

It is not intended to continue this censorship of the picture.

('Birmingham's unofficial film censors—the Entertainments Committee of the licensing justices—have decided that "The Wicked Lady" film, now showing at the Gaumont Cinema, is too wicked to be shown on Sundays.

'The official reason for banning the film is that it is neither healthy nor of an elevating character.

'The five "censors" are local business and professional men.' (January 25th, 1946. *Daily Mail*.)

BELLMAN SAVED

November 23rd, 1945 CITY PRESS

Two visitors to the tower of St. Michael's, Cornhill, on Monday, saved the life of Thomas Langdon, aged 72, who for over thirty years has tended the bells fortnightly in the famous belfry.

In the ordinary way of his duty, Mr. Langdon ascended the tower, as he has done so often, to oil the bells.

Unfortunately, one of them swung over and Mr. Langdon was trapped by the ankle with a weight of something like a ton.

The bells are at the top of some 128 steps, and work is only possible from a tiny platform.

Two visitors to the church asked to be allowed to ascend the tower. On reaching the platform they discovered the position. An alarm was given, and Mr. Langdon was released by members of the Fire Brigade with the aid of a hydraulic jack. He was brought down the narrow stairs in a canvas blanket. It appears that Mr. Langdon was trapped for two and a half hours, and for some time was unconscious. When brought down, however, he was cheerful, and smiled and waved good-bye to the Rector as he was placed in the ambulance, to be taken to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

A DEMONSTRATION IN PARLIAMENT AGAINST THE BRETTON WOODS PROPOSAL

December 22nd, 1945 THE SPHERE

On the day when Parliament was debating the new financial pact with America, an original demonstration was being carried on outside the Commons against the Bretton Woods Agreement. A man who gave his name as W. Graham, appeared dressed up as a dollar magnet with a huge cigar and a silk topper with a dollar sign in front of it. He was accompanied by a woman chained to him by several yards of heavy 'golden' chain, representing the 'Gold Standard', with a banner bearing the slogan 'To Hell with Bretton Woods'.

A DOG RUNS SIX MILES IN THE TUBE

October 2nd, 1946 DAILY MAIL

At 5.55 last evening the driver of a Northern Line tube train pulled up with a jerk 200 yards short of London's Angel station. He saw ahead of him a large white dog which began to trot towards the station. The train followed slowly.

And for ten more stops the dog loped steadily ahead of the train, through Old-street, Moorgate, the Bank, London Bridge, Borough, the Elephant, Kennington, the Oval, Stockwell, and Clapham North.

Then, at Clapham Common, the train arrived first. The dog followed slowly.

It had stopped at the side of the tunnel, apparently for a well-earned breather.

On reaching the lights of Clapham Common the dog decided it had had enough, jumped up on to the platform as the train was pulling out ahead of it, whisked through the exit, up the escalator, and out into the street.

That was at 6.50. Dog and train had covered six miles in 55 minutes.

A London Transport official said last night: 'Trains on that section were slowed down by nearly half an hour afterwards.'

JUDGE ORDERS A 'KING' TO TAKE OFF HIS CROWN

October 31st, 1946 EVENING NEWS

'His Majesty Wladyslaw, fifth King of Hungary and Poland and other territories', wearing long purple robes, was ordered by Judge Earengy, K.C., at Clerkenwell County Court to-day to remove his crown. He declined to do so and was told he would not be heard.

Under the name of G. V. Potocki he had been sued for arrears of rent by the landlords of premises at Peter-street, Islington.

He was applying for amendment of the particulars so as to describe him as 'Count Geoffrey Wladyslaw Varle Potocki of Monteith, in conformity with his rent-book, national identity card, and former British passport.

'Count Potocki' wore a purple beret when he came into court, but just before the judge took his seat he removed the beret and disclosed a crown.

'We appear in person,' announced Count Potocki.

Judge Earengy: 'I cannot allow headgear of this sort. In this court every man has to appear uncovered—a soldier or anyone else.'

Count Potocki then left the court.

A PICKPOCKET'S MISTAKE

November 11th, 1946 THE TIMES

In Tottenham Court Road on Saturday a pick-pocket approached a well-dressed man, furtively placed an experienced hand into a bulging pocket, and removed the contents. Suddenly a yell was heard above the noise of the traffic and the pick-pocket ran down a side street. He had picked from the pocket of a magician a small non-poisonous snake, which wriggled down a drain and disappeared.

'CANON LAW' GOES UP IN FLAMES

July 30th, 1948 BRIXTON FREE PRESS

From almost every window in St. Stephen's Terrace, faces peered. Children clung to vantage places on steps and porches. All were looking toward the porch of St. Stephen's Church, outside which, in the roadway, more than 100 people were gathered in a semicircle.

It was very warm in the terrace, but it was going to be even warmer. They were about to witness 'history in the making', a souvenir pamphlet of the public burning told them.

Shortly after 8 o'clock Mr. W. H. Hetherington, lay reader of St. Stephen's, stepped into the road and lighted a number of split tarred logs and cork in a brazier improvised from an army type wash-handstand. Flames rose high as the crowd moved back a little.

Then the Rev. R. Hood, vicar of the church, dressed in cassock, strode to the fire and placed on the flames a bound volume of 'The Canon Law of the Church of England', saying as he did so:

'By virtue of my vows which I made at my ordination to the Ministry of the Church of England, I am ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word. I therefore consign to the flames this Book, 'The Canon Law of the Church of England', as it contains erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word.'

A murmur of approval rose from some of the

crowd as the pages began to crumple in the flames.

In a sermon delivered at a service held before the burning, Mr. Hood had explained why he disapproves of the book.

Before and while the burning took place, the Rev. C. Moore, vicar of St. Augustine's, Highbury, standing on a platform before the fire, denounced both 'The Canon Law' and Anglo-Catholic practices.

When the book had burnt away to a few black ashes, Mr. Hood asked the crowd to go home quietly, and retired into the church. They did, after the whitehaired, bearded, Rev. W. Kitley, of Bristol, had performed a benediction.

During the service Mr Hood announced that as the meeting was under police supervision, he did not think it wise to invite questions. About half-a-dozen police watched the burning.

Messages from the Archbishop of Sydney, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Mowll, and from an Anglican bishop in China, were read by Mr. Hood during the service. Dr. Mowll expressed thanks for a reference to his uncle, 'whose ministry in Brixton was a blessing to so many.'

'Most of the false doctrines which are stealing back among us were embodied in "The Canon Law of the Church of England",' Mr Hood said.

'That is why we are going to burn it publicly.' The authors of the Canons were asking the King to share his authority with the Church authorities. This in any other age would be counted treason.

It was because of a strong, clean sense of duty as loyal churchmen that they were there, he said, and felt bound to resist this book, 'falsely called "The Canon Law of the Church of England". If this book becomes law it will destroy the whole

foundation of our civilisation and undermine the word and work of God in our midst.

‘The proposed changes in doctrine and ritual contained in this book were matters which greatly concerned laity and clergy alike.

‘It is by the people that the Church is maintained. Surely they have a right for their voice to be heard.’

The book of Canon Law was a serious departure from the teaching and services of the established Church. ‘When the King asked for the marriage service of the 1662 Prayer Book at the marriage of his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, his request was not granted.’

‘AGAINST THE PEOPLE’

‘The Prayer Book of 1662 and the Bible are the only two books we need, and the only two books we mean to use. This book is against the people. You are going to find it more difficult to be married and to have your children baptised in Church if you do not resist the spirit which lies behind this book.’

A MONTH UNBURIED

July 1st, 1949 BRIXTON FREE PRESS

For at least three weeks a dead man was lying in the top-floor flat at 42 Kellett Road, Brixton, and nobody knew, not even the other occupants of the house. Then on Wednesday last week, a representative of the agents, calling to inspect repair work, found the body of Alfred Smith, aged about 60, an entertainer using the stage name of Wally Rayland, by which he is better known in the district. He had been in poor health for some time and had evidently died suddenly. There was no suggestion of foul play.

The discovery was made by Mr. T. Ratcliffe-Springall. He 'was shocked to find Mr. Smith's body in bed, partly clothed and in an advanced stage of decomposition. A calendar on the living room wall was marked up till May 21st'.

In the living room were many photographs of his wife and child. His wife died a few years ago, and his six-year-old son, Paul Rayland, had had to be sent to the Gracie Fields Home at Peacehaven.

Mrs. Nash, tenant of the bottom flat, said: 'I had not seen him for three weeks. I thought he was in hospital.' There will not be an inquest on Mr. Rayland, death having been certified as due to natural causes.

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